



Yeho

by *Anasis*

Genre: Historical, Gender Bender, Romance

About Main Characters:

Joo Hee-un (Emperor, handsome, strong)

Yeho (pretty, gender bender, weak, sick)

Part 1

It's raining.

That's what I thought watching the world looking blurry because of the rain.

A shower of rain. The rain that will just pass by.

His long black hair was calmly placed on his shoulder. He felt chill because of the cold wet air. He was thinking that while he was fixing his blue blanket on his shoulder.

He put his cold hand outside and because of the strong rain fall, his sleeve got completely wet.

He placed his drenched wet hand on his mouth.

The water smeared into his dried cracked lips, and the smell of water hit his nose.

Tomorrow the air will be clean. I said it quietly. The day after the rain the air was somehow very fresh and clean. I always liked that, so I always waited for the rain.

“Yeho.”

It’s my sister’s voice.

I turned my head to my sister who just came into the room. She looked like a magnolia flower. Her beauty used to be beautiful like a fresh bloomed flower, but now her white gloomy face looked like a magnolia flower that is drenched wet due to the strong drops of rain.

“What were you watching?”

I smiled because her voice was very gentle and soft. My sister who is very kind and beautiful. I’m always in a mess, but my gentle sister is always neatly organized. She never used any kind of powder on her face unlike any other women, but her face was flawless like some of the powder is going to get on my finger if I touch her cheek. Her fair skin, smooth forehead, neat eyebrows, and underneath her lashes were long like an opened fan and her black eyes. Everything really fit well with her face.

If my sister was a flower, I’m that flower’s tear. A shower of rain that wets the magnolia. The cold air that the rain brings made magnolia shiver, and that strong drops of rain ruined the flower's pedals.

“You were looking at the rain again. Oh no, you will get wet. Close the window. Don’t just blankly stare at the rain.”

She said it quietly. She quickly closed the window.

“Sister, you are leaving tomorrow.”

Her hand slightly trembled because what I said.

“You heard something bad again.”

She said it like it was nothing, but end of her voice was slightly shaking. I smirked with my dried lips.

“It’s not bad right? My sister is getting married. Isn’t that something we should celebrate? I probably could see my sister with colorful silk dress tomorrow. I didn’t see you wearing those ever since I got little older. It must be nice to see.”

“...Yeho.”

“No. Wasn’t North Empire’s tradition is to make a bride wear a silk dress like a pure white magnolia? But isn’t that good also? My sister never even had a proper cotton clothes.”

My sister bit her peach-blossom like lips because of my twisted words. I coldly looked at my sister.

“Why are you making that face? You don’t want to go to the North Empire? It will be much better than this old crappy house. You will be able to eat and wear good things. Why are you making such a gloomy face?”

“...Yeho. It’s cold because of the rain. Go lie down.”

She tried to change the subject. She always says that with a teary eyes and a pale face.

“No. Open the window again. I want to watch the rain.”

“Yeho.”

She quietly called me and sighed. She slightly opened the window. About so that the rain and wind won’t come in. That made me ever madder. I stood up and opened the window widely. Just then a strong wind blew and the rain poured at me.

“Ye...!”

“Stop now!”

I pushed my sister who panicked and tried to stop me. I screamed at her.

“Say it if you don’t want it. Tell them that you don’t want to get marry! Tell them that you have a lover who loves you. Tell them that you don’t care about your sick younger brother. Tell them that you sacrificed enough with your 18 years of life. And tell them don’t ask more things for me to do!”

“...Ye...ho...”

“Are you stupid? An idiot? Why can’t you say something that simple and hold that cold heart of yours? Is it your fault that our house is poor? Is it your fault that I have weak lungs? Say I can’t do it anymore and kill me instead. Who’s going to blame you?”

“...It’s cold... you got wet. Mother will get mad if you get sick again.”

She was just worrying about me crying. I said,

“Who’s going to get sick? I’ll die before I get sick.”

“Yeho!!”

“Run away. Yesterday your lover came. He couldn’t even say give me your sister to me. He just laughed and left. Why are you guys so much alike? He came and just worried about me. His eyes were swollen because he wanted to see you, but he didn’t even say a single word about you. I don’t like myself. I’m sick of seeing your desolate face. I don’t want to see mother bothering you to make me well. So just run away. Run away with your lover.”

I said with a begging voice. She bit her lips and shook her head.

“Why, why!! Why are you so stupid! I told you I don’t want it anymore!”

“...They made a promise. If I go instead of Princess Sooyoung, they will give thousand bag of rice. With, with that you can buy your medicine, and mother won't have to work hard....”

She dragged her voice. I shouted at her.

“Who said to worry about my medicine money? Who said to worry about mother? She always said she works hard and complains about when she will be able to not work. But it was you who always worked! How can a human be so naive?”

“Then what should I do?”

Her voice whispered like crying and blaming, and that made my heart ache.

“What should I do? Yeho.”

I went to my sister who was standing still. I slightly bend down my back because she was smaller than me. Her eyes like black pearl were looking at me. I touched her white warm cheek. My hand that was like pale dried tree branch touched my sister's cheek. She closed her eyes.

“I beg you, Sister. Don't worry about the house just leave with your lover.”

“..Yeho.”

“Whatever. Who cares if we can't keep the promise? Are you the only distant relative? You were picked just because you are more beautiful than royal family's treasure Princess Sooyoung. We are not the only poor distant relatives they have. They won't care even if you run away.”

“...You...Mother...”

“Mother should work now. And I got lot better these days. So go with your lover. Mother will cause trouble if she finds out, so leave secretly. Your lover needs to leave the capital because of merchandise. That's why he was wandering around here to see you even once more yesterday. So leave right now with your things.”

“...Tomorrow is the day though...:

“I will do something about it. Am I that untrustworthy younger brother to you?”

I smiled at her, and she smiled at me back.

Part 2

“Ahhhhhhhh!”

The scream was really loud like it was going to rip out my ear. Things in my sister's room were flying across the room and got destroyed. In the middle of the chaos, there was my mother who beautifully did her make-up and fancily did her hair didn't care how her hair was getting messed up. She is turning 40, yet she doesn't even have single wrinkle on her face. My sister's mother died from an illness, and right away she took over her place. She was a concubine who was a courtesan before. She gave birth to a son who has lung disease and yet acting all proud. And being mean to my sweet sister because she was her step daughter.

“Hye! You whore...!!”

She was cursing and being fretful, and I smiled.

“Running away is avoiding being a whore, Mother. Selling her body because of money and leaving her lover isn't it like a whore?”

“Yeho!”

“I’ll send a message to His Majesty that my sister is ugly and didn’t take care of her body well, so I apologize, but I can’t send my sister to North Empire.”

I fixed my blue blanket on my shoulders and tried to leave, but my mother’s sharp but shaking voice grabbed my attention.

“You can’t!”

That voice had some fear in it, and that made me feel nervous. What did my childish mother do this time...? I slowly turned and looked at my mother’s beautifully colored lips.

“I...I gave away half of thousand bags.”

“...Half? To where?”

I said it with accusing voice, and she stepped back. I smirked.

“You gave it away instead of your debt.”

“Ye, Yeho.”

“Right. Somehow it was quiet recently. You can think of paying off your debt for selling away my sister?”

“Wha, what should we do Yeho? Huh? Bring that bitch. Right now the carriage that will take her is coming. Before that bring Hye. You know where she is right? You...”

I smirked listening to my mother’s begging. Bad woman. You vulgar woman who can’t even think straight. I have this illness because this kind of woman is my mother. Her son has illness every day, and he is dull-witted. That kind of son is right front of her face, but she still doesn’t know her sin.

“So, you don’t want to die?”

“Yeho.”

“Just leave the rest of the rice and leave, Mother.”

“...Ye..ho?”

“I could kill you and kill myself. Leave before I change my mind, Mother.”

“What...are..”

“Even though I’m a weakling who can’t even hold a sword, I can hear people calling me reprobate son. The reason why I’m not doing that is because I still want to treat you as my mother. Even if I hate you or love you, you are my mother. So just leave only with your body, Mother.”

“...Yeho..”

“I don’t have power to bring her back. And I don’t want to bring her back. I can’t ruin my sister’s life because of your selfishness. If that nice person goes to North Empire, I know she will die from spending her time crying. I don’t want to bring her to save my and your life. You should know that this all happened because of you. I sent her away because I knew His Majesty won’t be that mad if I return the rice. But you turned that into a sin. You are the one who made it into sin that can be punished by ripping our body into pieces for deceiving the king.”

“.....”

“I’m telling you to run away because I feel pity that you are so afraid of dying. If you don’t go now, you will die by my hand.”

Her face turned pale after I said that. She probably knew that what I said did not have single of lie in it. She right away went out the room.

I coldly smile at her. I told her to run away only with her body, but she will take all the treasure that she hid in her room. My sister was always busy working to earn money for my medicine, but my mother was always busy decorating herself and secretly took some money for my medicine and used it on gambling. Even so she never let go of her jewelry. Looking at only that part, she was pretty good at those.

I looked around the room that she messed up. In the corner there was a pure white bride dress hanging on the wall. It even had veil that was made out of really thin silk. I calmly took off the blue blanket that was on my shoulders. I untied my long hair and took off my jeogori. The air that was touching my skin was cold. I coughed. I hardly calmed the coughs and took off my pants. Wore underpants on my skinny legs look like bamboo sticks. On top of that, I wore layers of underskirts and wore the dress skirt. I tied it around my chest and wore jeogori. The jeogori was long that it covered one third of the skirt. On top of the jeogori, I wore a white silk belt and wore a long silk dress. I wore the veil on my head that I made me look like a woman. Luckily because I was sick often, I couldn't grow tall and big as any regular men, so the dress fit me as well. I saw the mirror and because the veil was in two layers, they couldn't see the face well. I think I could pull it off until I get to the North Empire. They said she was going to be a concubine for the old Emperor, so if I'm lucky I can buy time for my sister and her lover can run away far as they can and make a family, and my mother can lie and remarry an unlucky old man with her jewelry that she took. If that time comes, no one will cry even if I die alone.

I quietly went out the gate hearing people calling for me.

Part 3

The North Empire was especially cold and foggy. There weren't many days with sun, so I had to deal with the cold air around me. I secretly rode the carriage from my house and went inside the palace through the back gate. The weather was nice until I got on the carriage that the North Empire sent for Princess Sooyoung. But little by little going up the north, the air turned cold, and it drizzled more often. A maid taking care of me said it usually snows a lot, but it was still warm, so it rains instead of snow. It rains like this. When the day gets cold, it snows. When it snows, it blows wind a lot and continuously dry for days. After about two months without rain or snow, it rains and spring starts. That rain comes very often until spring ends, so all the crops grow well, and it is the start of summer. They harvest right before fall begins then it starts to rain like this and snows, and the winter starts again. Spring is the most humid and hot. After the short spring, it is usually cold. The maid joked how the summer is pretty okay, but people like me from south will think summer will feel like fall, and fall will feel like winter. I smiled at her wearing the veil and quietly sat on the carriage. People didn't think weird about me not taking off the veil and about how I didn't wash well. I always coughed, so they probably think I have a cold. And there weren't wrong. Not only I didn't take off the dress not to get caught that I'm a man, but also it was too cold for me to move around. I could feel little bit of fever and cold sweat. But I can't lose conscious here. I firmly grabbed the coat made out of animal fur.

North Empire's palace made me feel dizzy because it was too beautiful. Even if I was coughing, I could clearly see the grand view. It was like us putting up the roof tile, but it was bigger and fancier. I thought this is the big country. I got sick of it because it was too big. The gate door handle was even too big for me to lift it.

I went to my palace and before taking off the white dress, I bow three times to northwest side where the Emperor went out to look around, and I drank two cups of alcohol. The maid told me that's it for a concubine's nuptial, and I went to my room. I was about to faint right away, but I couldn't let go of my alertness because the maid was trying to help me take off the dress. I just told her to prepare for a warm water, a fragrance, and a towel then I will do the rest, but the maid didn't leave my side. I screamed at her copying how my mother used to do, and she got scared and left. I sighed and took off the dress. I forcibly moved my hand to wash my body that I couldn't wash properly during the trip. I can't even remember when I used the warm water. My body got relaxed, so after I washed myself, I changed it to normal clothes. Right away I slept on a pillow, and I heard the maids taking out the water. I heard what those two were saying. The Emperor is on a patrol, so it will take few month for him to come back, and he will probably forget about his new concubine by then. I sighed. In that few months, my sister probably ran away as far as she can and forget about my mother, and I will die from the illness. I looked at the ceiling with my blurry eyes and thought I was prepared that I couldn't live long in this cold place. I almost lost my conscious few times because of fever due to the cold air. I tried to hold my coughs, but I couldn't hold it for long and coughed a lot and sometimes some blood showed in the mucus. Soon this weak body will collapse. I smiled sadly.

“Cough, cough....cough cough...”

I coughed with a towel covering my mouth, and I saw the maid moving away from me. This maid looked little vicious, and whenever I coughed little bit, she moved away like I spread diseases. Well, I'm not complaining. I felt uncomfortable getting service because I was nervous that I might get revealed. I calmly control the cough that tried to come out. There was some blood on the towel again. I smiled bitterly and hid the stain and called the maid.

“Bring me a warm cup of tea.”

My voice was all cracked, and it didn't sound like woman at all. But the maid never thought it was suspicious probably because she thought it was because I was coughing a lot. She pushed a jade tea cup and a jade kettle from far away from me. I didn't get mad at her. I just poured the tea in the cup. I smiled at looking at light green liquid filling up the cup. I drink tea only because my throat gets really dry due to my cough. People who really like tea were my sister and her lover not me. They will probably smile happily if they see this beautiful colored high quality tea. I laughed holding the cup. I felt the maid was getting further away, but I didn't mind. My sister and her lover probably doing well right now. Having a son and a daughter. They will probably want many kids because they didn't have many siblings themselves. They will have at least 12 kids. I really missed my sister even though it has only been two months since I send them away. My mother is a vicious woman, so she will survive anywhere she goes. I wasn't worry and didn't miss her because what she did in the past. I missed and worried about my sister who always worked hard and finally was able meet her other half. I missed her more because I started to lose my strength every day. And I can't even show my feelings to anyone. Everyone thinks I'm Princess Sooyoung. It's funny. They think I'm Princess Sooyoung, but I'm not, and I'm a man. I smiled and put down the tea. It was raining outside.

“..It’s raining.”

Maybe because I drank tea, my voice got much better. The small maid replied.

“This raining will be the last. It will be winter soon, Your Highness.”

Ah, that winter where it will blow cold and dry wind. I smiled bitterly and sat down.

“Last rain. That’s too bad.”

I murmured and widely open the window. The maid didn’t like that idea she said, ‘You will cough more if you do that, Your Highness.’

“Who cares? I will only die if I cough more. I will die this way; I will die that way. If I’m going to die anyway, I want to die while I do what I like.”

I smiled and replied to her. She had a face that she didn’t like what I said, but she slightly bend down her knees and bowed and left the room. I rest my chin on my hand and watched the rain falling. This cold air was different than when I was coming here. Painful cold air was smearing into my chest, but I didn’t stop. I put my hand out to feel the rain. The cold rain drops were wetting my hand and came down to my sleeve. I touched my lips with that hand. The water was wetting my dried cracked lips where I applied lipstick to pretend to be a woman. It had the smell of water and the powder probably because some powder got left on my hand when I was applying it on my face. I felt like that powder smelled like my sister. Isn’t it funny, Sister? You never even had chance to apply powder. This high quality powder smells like you. You are probably can apply powder now. Even if it’s not expensive, your lover will probably bought you powder and lipstick. You probably won’t use it because you feel awkward, and your lover will sulk because of that.

I put down my hand and stared at the window again and thought.

If my sister is able to live like that... If she is able to live like that, then I will die like this. I will end my life that you gave like this. I don’t feel like it’s a waste. What I feel like waste is that I can’t see you being happy. That’s a waste.

I closed my eyes and heard the sound of rain. I fixed the soft blanket on my shoulder and felt the cold air on my face... I was never this comfortable this past month because I was sick over and over again. I don’t cough anymore and thought of my sister. I want to leave like this like I’m sleeping.

I quietly hummed. When I was little, when I mother was too busy going out neglecting her son, my sister always sang this lullaby to me while I was sick. My sister didn't know the lyrics too, so she just hummed it to me. I rest my head on her knee, and she pat my back, and I felt her warmth. I slept like that hearing this lullaby.

Right then, I felt someone coming into the room. This quiet steps. I think it's the maid Soa who is nicer to me than the other one. I thought she was going to close the window, so I told her with my eyes closed.

"Leave it be, Soa. The air is nice. It's clean because of the rain. I will close it later, so you can leave and do your work."

"Won't you die like this even before you could close the window with that pale face of yours?"

I opened my eyes right away. There was a tall and handsome man closing the window. I just blankly stared at him. I just stared at him until he closed the window and turned to me.

"I heard that Princess Sooyoung was a beauty, but it's seems like I was wrong. Pale face and skinny body like I can see the bones. It won't be weird if you just die right now."

"Who are you?"

"Who can I be? The only man who could come into a concubine's palace by himself."

I weakly smiled at him after I coldly replied.

"It is my grace to meet you, Your Majesty. I apologize for greeting you like this sitting down."

"Stop that. I came here right away after the patrol to see that famous Princess Sooyoung, but there is a dying corpse instead."

His ruthless words made me smile deeper. I was surprised myself too. I thought you were an old Emperor I didn't know that you were a young man. If Princess Sooyoung finds out about this, she'll get a stomachache. (means jealous) I murmured to myself. I stood up slowly.

“Sorry for being a corpse, You Majesty. You can take back your word right now. Ask them for another princess.”

He frowned little bit because of my rude words. He made a face like he was smiling.

“Very sharp tongue. You should hide it well. I can get lazy pulling out that tongue, so I can just cut your head off.”

“Oh my. You can’t do anything with cutting off the corpse’s head, Your Majesty.”

I calmly replied and wear blanket and sat on the tea table. The Emperor looked at me and came down to sit right front of me.

“You are rude.”

“I apologize, Your Majesty.”

I bend down my head, and the Emperor looked at me calmly. I quietly looked at his black eyes. They kind of looked like my sister’s eyes. Those eyes like black pearl. But those were colder than my sister’s. Cold and cruel character was showing in his eyes.

I laughed. He frowned at my laugh.

“Are you going to spend a night, Your Majesty?”

“I don’t have a hobby being with a corpse.”

I quietly sighed with his words. Today is probably not the day I’m going to die. He probably read my relieved face. He frowned. But he changed back to his stern expression and said.

“I didn’t have it, but I’m thinking of making it from now on.”

Because of his words, I bitterly smiled. I took a deep breath and said.

“I didn’t think I would tell you this.”

He looked at me suspiciously after my words. His face was saying what are you trying to say. I opened my mouth with aloof face.

“I heard that you went out on the patrol, and I thought I was going to die before you come. And I never thought you would want to spend a night with me who is like a corpse. So I don’t have anything prepare to say...”

I stopped my word and took a deep breath.

“Even if you make a hobby of being with a corpse, you won’t make a hobby of spending a night with a man?”

He froze because of what I said.

Part 4

“Yeho.”

He turned around with his pale face. His small shoulders and skinny face made the Emperor feel annoyed.

“You didn’t eat again.”

“I wasn’t hungry. If I get that kind of fancy meal three times a day, even if it was a healthy man, it’s too much. Isn’t it Your Majesty?”

“Then you should’ve at least ate something I prepared, porridge with ginseng. I even ordered them to put quail meat.”

“Hahaha. You told them to do that? They will make fun of you. What kind of emperor takes care of his meal?”

“I don’t do that if it was my meal.”

“That makes it even worse.”

He joked around and coughed. The Emperor got surprised and put his hand on his back.

“Ah, I’m okay. It’s just a minor cough.”

“I heard you watched the rain again yesterday.”

Yeho just smiled.

“I told you not to leave the window opened. Even if it’s spring, it’s too cold. You just got better after being sick during winter. How much do I have to say more?”

“I was happy that it rained... Today is very clear because it rained. I feel great looking at a clear sky after seeing dusty sky, and the air is very clean.”

“Even so.”

“I wore thick clothes. When will it shower?”

“When will you stop asking me that question? That kind of strong rain takes more than 10 days to come.”

“I heard that if the weather gets warmer, the magnolia flowers will bloom?”

“That’s what I’ve been told.”

I don’t care about the flower season. One day Yeho asked about magnolia flower, so I asked a gardener. Now he is waiting for the flower to bloom. I looked at him with displeased face and said.

“Do you like magnolia flower that much?”

“Yes, it’s like my sister.”

“You always talk about your sister.”

“Hahaha. She was always wet because of her rain-like brother. Every year I gave her a hard time. She lost her mother because of my mother and because of me she was pushed aside. Even so she never complained and took care of me. And when my sister’s eyes were about to dry, it rained again.”

The Emperor kept his stern expression. He doesn’t show lot of expression because of his cold personality, but it’s also because he was trained to do that ever since he was a crowned prince. Yeho knew that, and he smiled. The Emperor looked at him and shook his head.

“Never mind. Even if you smile, even if you talk about the rain and magnolia flower, I won’t let you pass this time. I told them to prepare the porridge again. You must eat that.”

“Oh no. I should’ve at least acted like I was eating.”

He had a perplexed face, but he smiled happily. Looking at Yeho like that, the Emperor slightly smiled. This man is weird. The Emperor murmured inside of him. I thought he was a weird man when I first met him. No, I thought he was a woman that time. My father who loved woman gathered all the beautiful women around the small kingdoms, and the last one he called was Princess Sooyoung from a small kingdom where I don’t even remember the name. My father was so thrill for her to come, but she always postponed the dates. Finally he threatened them with his weak body and at last they were preparing for her to leave. But even before she left the kingdom, my father died. I did the coronation forgetting about Princess Sooyoung. I had organized the empire because there were some business that

he already started, and I had to go on a patrol to show people their new emperor. Because of those busy days her existence disappeared in my head. And after I got from the patrol, because of my father death, that woman had to come in as my concubine. I heard the news that she was dying. She was weak when they were coming, and she lived with cough ever since she came. Nobody called her to greet. They said she just stayed in her small palace and waited for her death day to come. I remember before my father died, he always had her name around him, so I got curious and went to see her.

It was weird that no one came out from the palace when I came. There were no servants who always had to stand there and wait, and no servants were running around busily. I told the body guards to leave before I came here, and the palace looked like no one was living there. It was gloomier because of that. There was nobody inside of the palace also. Where did all those servants go? I should scold the head of the servants. Then I heard a faint humming sound. It was strange but familiar soft sound. I saw a woman sitting next to the window humming a song closing her eyes. An awkward make-up clearly showed her pale complexion. Her long hair was loosely tied, and her clothing wasn't very neatly done. It was very strange to me because I only saw women with nice make-up and neatly did their hair with oil and decorate themselves with bunch of jewelry. When I stepped inside the room, I felt the cold air right instant, so I closed the window right away. Then I heard her voice saying leave it be. She probably thought I was a maid because she called out her name. Her voice was little deeper than any women, but I heard she lives with cough. I didn't think it was weird. It made me focus on to her more because of her low but strangely soft voice. But the woman didn't say anything anymore, and I purposely talked to her. She opened her eyes with surprise and stared at me because she wasn't expecting a man's voice. I was surprised that she had clear brown eyes. The color was like a baby deer that I caught last time. And her hair wasn't black either. It was like dark wooden brown color. But her face wasn't beautiful. The lines were very thin but not beautiful. I never thought this woman was a man until he calmly told me.

"It's heated. I'm fine with cold one..."

The servant had a porridge on a tray. Yeho said it with perplexed face, and the Emperor woke up from his day dream.

"It's not okay. If your lungs are weak, he said it's not good to leave your body cold."

Yeho smiled weakly and started to eat the porridge. The Emperor smiled looking at him eating the porridge little by little. The body that was thin like a chopstick now gained some weight. His complexion was better. He didn't look like a patient anymore. The Emperor felt strange that he felt happy about that. This man is definitely weird. This man named Yeho made me happy in a strange place.

He confessed being a male, but he neither made any excuses nor begged for his life. He said that the sins he committed deceiving the Emperor, and with his male body coming into the concubines' palace are worth to die. Asking him to kill him with that dying face didn't make the Emperor mad or lose his word. Yes, that was weird. He didn't take out his sword like usual when he rudely talked back to him. Instead he replied back with his word. Maybe I was bewitched by his clear brown eyes that didn't match with his boney face. Or maybe it was because of the humming lullaby sound mixed with the rain sound. Anyway, I didn't want to use my sword on him. Just like he

said, he deceived the Emperor and came inside the concubines' palace with a male body. It was obvious that I should've killed him or send him away to royal army. But I didn't want to do any of those.

He is weird. The Emperor thought about it again and touched his long hair. His brown eyes looked at the Emperor as predicted. The Emperor smiled.

"Your hair was about to get inside the porridge."

Yeho put down his spoon and collect his hair to the one side. He missed the feeling of his hair sliding through his fingers.

"It's always like this. I can't organize my hair. I'm not neat..."

Yeho was little bit hastily and sloppily tied his hair. The Emperor was curious why he was in a hurry. He organized his baby hair sticking out.

"What about not being neat? It looks bothering you, but I like your hair. I don't like hair that's organized with oil. It looks too greasy. The government officials and concubines are all the same. Sometimes I feel like I'm looking at dolls. You don't put hair oil on your hair?"

"Then I need to wash it out anyway. If I don't wash it every day, it collects dusts, and that causes coughs for me."

"Is it? That's why your hair is always looks like a feather."

The Emperor touched his shiny but little dry hair. Depending on the side of light, his hair looked red or brown. He carefully observed his hair and said.

"Your color is unique."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. It looks black, but it changes when the light hit."

“My mother was like that. She had a dark wooden brown color.”

Yeho took out his hair from the Emperor’s hand.

“It’s time, Your Majesty. You should go. It’s time for your government affair.”

The Emperor frowned.

“It seems like you know my schedule better than I do.”

“It’s because I can see the eunuch wondering if he should come in or not from outside.”

He replied and started to eat again.

“If you go for your work then I will finish this bowl.”

The Emperor stood up.

“I’m going to come and check after I finish my work. And I’m going to come little late to check if you closed the window.”

“You are going to be back?”

Yeho asked with surprised look, and the Emperor nodded.

“Why? I can’t?”

“It’s not like that... You Majesty. I think you are coming here too often... Don’t people say anything bad?”

Yeho frowned because of worry.

“Why, did you hear something?”

“No, it’s not like that but...”

Yeho dragged his last word, and the Emperor put his hand on his shoulder and shook his head.

“You worry too much. Finish your porridge.”

He strictly ordered him and left the room smiling.

Part 5

"-nim" is like honorific way to call people like "-sama" in Japanese

After His Majesty left, I stared at the porridge. It was still warm, and I sighed.

The thing...didn’t go as I planned. Actually it didn’t go as I planned since while back. Something changed after I confessed that I’m a man to the Emperor four months ago. I was about to die, but he didn’t let me. He send away all the servants and filled my palace with heavy lips people. And kept the fact that I’m a man in secret completely from the outside of my palace. And he took care of what I eat and what I wear. At first I was worried how he will change his mind, but now I argue with him about what I eat.

He is weird. When I first met him, he was like a cold blooded, but now occasionally he smiles. He is truly worrying about me. Then I remembered that I had to finish this bowl of porridge. I sighed, but I started to eat the porridge again. It got little cooler, so it was easier for me to eat, and finally I finished eating. I called the servant to clean up my bowl. And this one small girl came and started to clean up.

“Where is Soa?”

I asked, and this cute small girl nervously answered.

“Soa-nim went to the crop storage.”

“Why crop storage?”

“His Majesty ordered her to get some rice.”

“I thought we have a lot left...?”

I replied and the girl politely bowed her head.

“His Majesty ordered to give away the left over rice to the outside of the palace because it’s too old and get some new rice.”

After she replied, I sighed. This...

“When Soa comes, tell her to come see me.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

Short after the girl went out, Soa came in.

“You called, Your Highness.”

“You went to the crop storage?”

“Because of His Majesty order...”

She answered politely, and her face was calm. She had a gentle face but except when she talks her lips are always horizontal, so she kind of looks cold. But I knew. Her eyes had little surprised emotion in it. She only makes that face when she does something I don't like.

“Didn't I tell you to tell me what he orders?”

“But... Your Highness..”

Soa quietly bowed her back and replied.

“It was His Majesty's order. How can a person like me go against him...”

“Soa. We are talking about the different thing. I never told you to go against His Majesty's order. I just told you to tell me what he orders.”

“That includes in what he ordered, Your Highness.”

“...His Majesty...? Told you not to tell me?”

I frowned and asked. And Soa answered very calmly.

“Yes, Your Highness. He said you'll nag again... He told me to go without you knowing.”

“...I'll tell him.”

“But, Your Highness. If you say that to His Majesty, I will get scolded..”

“...You know I won’t make you in a difficult stand.”

“His Majesty will get mad anyway. I have the responsibility of this palace. So for not able to taking care of the underling...”

“Ah... I won’t. It was my mistake to win you over with talking.”

Soa was the only servant who didn’t stay distant from me when I first came here. Even though she has a cold expression, she was very gentle. She always brought me cup of tea whenever I coughed or rub my back with a heated stone. She never disobeyed me, but she was smart enough to know how to go against my will. She was too young to be called as a woman, but His Majesty put her next to me probably because he knew she was smart.

I sighed and looked at Soa. Soa didn’t even turn her head, but she knew I was looking at her. She bend down her back more and said.

“Is there anything else you want me to do?”

“No, nothing. I don’t want to talk to you anymore. I will tell His Majesty after he comes.”

She laughed because of my sulking voice.

“Don’t just laugh. You probably have something to do. You can leave.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

Soa bowed and was about to leave the room. I stared at her small back and said something that I kept it for a while.

“There is a ghost in Flower Fence Palace that tempts His Majesty?”

Soa stopped. She turned to me and bowed.

“I don’t know what you are saying...”

“His Majesty is keep going in and out of the palace where a concubine is dying. The servants were talking about that.”

“....”

“The ghost can’t be seen from other people’s eyes. Only His Majesty can see that concubine. Actually the princess from the small kingdom died from an illness, and only her spirit remained. That spirit is tempting His Majesty to do harm... Didn’t you hear any story like this?”

“....I....”

“His Majesty got tempted by the ghost, so he’s keep sending those rice and keep it rot there. He is often late for his government affairs and never visit the Empress.”

“.....”

“....What if the North Empire gets destroyed because of the ghost... Right now it’s only like this, but the spirit is remained because it’s holding a grudge. So it will....”

“Your Highness.”

Soa stopped my word and kneeled down and placed her forehead on the floor.

“Don’t... please, don’t say those things. I’m embarrassed.”

“People are funny.”

“.....”

“Even though this is a small palace, it’s still in the imperial palace. How can a mere ghost enter the palace... And how can someone like evil spirit like me.”

“Your Highness.”

“People working in this palace even talk about the rumor. I don’t think His Majesty knows it yet.”

“... Why are you thinking like that...”

“If he hears people talking about how the empire will end, he won’t come here anymore. He said he will come again late today.”

“.....”

“When His Majesty comes, tell him I finished my porridge and tell him I closed the window. Tell him that I went to sleep early today because I’m tired.”

“You are not going to see His Majesty..”

“If I can.”

I murmured after I sighed. I opened the window and looked outside.

Before His Majesty left, I told him I don’t worry about the bad rumors, but I do have ears. There is no way I don’t hear these kind of things. I closed my mouth because I was worried that some other people might get scolded. There was a rumor that Princess Sooyoung died because His Majesty suddenly limited the people who can access the palace and except for few servants, he sent them away. But still His Majesty always comes to this palace. That’s why that kind of rumor spreads. I laughed because it was too stupid, but still I felt uncomfortable hearing those rumors. I can live well anyway with those rumors, but His Majesty is different.

I was in my thoughts, and Soa said okay and left the room.

That night, His Majesty came, but Soa told him that I was sleeping. He came into my room and checked if I was really sleeping and left the room. I heard him leaving, and I actually fell asleep.

Part 6

It's showering.

I looked at the sky. It was full of dark clouds, and it was pouring. I put out my hand, and the rain drop was wetting my hand. It was so strong that my hand felt numb. North Empire even have big rain drops...

I was thinking something stupid like that. Looking at those rain, I wanted to see magnolia. I was worried that this rain might ruin the flower pedals. I liked the rain, but I didn't want the flowers to get ruined. The North Empire was very colder with the rain. It was numbing my tip of my nose, but it felt refresher. Breathing in the cold air made me feel much better, and my mind got clearer. I temporary stopped worrying about the magnolia. I pulled out my body and reached out further away. I put my sleeve up, but it was still getting wet little by little. I didn't care, and I enjoyed the feeling of getting my hand and arm wet.

"I came just in case. You are really..."

I heard a low voice. I quickly brought my hand back and wiped it on my sleeve.

".....You came?"

It's been 11 days since I saw His Majesty's face. I smiled and welcomed him. He never came at this hour, so I wasn't prepared for him. His Majesty just scolded me with his stern sulking face.

"I am not going to let it pass even if you smile. Do you know how cold it gets during the rain?"

I awkwardly hid my cold hand.

He sighed and closed the window. And the loud sound of rain got quieter. His Majesty grabbed my arm. He didn't pull it that strong, but I couldn't resist him.

"Look at this. It got really cold. What if you catch a cold again, huh? Yeho."

His voice was like scolding me, but I just awkwardly smiled.

“Don’t just smile like that.”

He wrapped around my cold wet hand with his warm dry hand to share his warmth. I was surprised to see his shoulder was little wet.

“You didn’t wear umbrella?”

He looked at him questionably, and he noticed my sight was at his shoulder and smiled.

“The eunuch was following me with an umbrella. Even if I push them away, they will not listen. And if I didn’t wear an umbrella, there is no way only my shoulders get wet.”

“That’s true...”

How did that eunuch hold the umbrella so that only his shoulders get wet... Now that I noticed that his black hair was little wet too. It was so cold just by leaving the window opened. His Majesty must be really cold wet like that.

“How did that eunuch hold the umbrella?”

“He was holding it properly. I was in hurry, so he couldn’t catch up with my steps.”

“Why did you even come out in this weather...?”

I quickly took out a dry towel from the closet. I organized the closet and quickly dried his hair and shoulder with worried face.

“It’s this cold...”

“You are saying what I was trying to say. Leaving the window open and wetting your hand. Do you know how you look right now?”

I questioned what His Majesty said. He read my expression and sighed.

“Your face is pale white. And your lips are white too. How long did you leave it opened?”

“...Only I can drink a cup of tea...”

“That’s too long.”

He said it strictly and grabbed my wrist that was holding the towel.

“And you got thinner. Every time I visit, you were always sleeping. I couldn’t even see you well. Are you even eating properly?”

“...I’m eating well.”

I was surprised that he came every day. I replied little late and awkwardly took out my hand.

“How about you? Isn’t it time for you to work right now? The officials will have hard time.”

He frowned.

“There is nothing I can do.”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s showering right now. I was sure that you were watching the rain. You won’t care if your body gets cold or fever. I had to come.”

“...Your Majesty.”

I called him, and he was faintly smiling at me. He looked at him, and he saw something behind me. He looked surprised. I turned around to see what it was. There was an opened closet with organized clothes. I probably couldn’t close it when I was taking out the towel. I didn’t know why he looked surprised then I heard his voice.

“That is...”

He walked towards the closet. I was in shock at the clothes that he was touching.

“Your...Your Majesty, that is...”

I quickly went to him and tried to stop him. I couldn’t fold it, so I hung it in the closet. It was the wedding dress. I wore that dress instead of my sister thinking I will die here. I took good care of the white silk and white laces decorated the dress. I hung it exactly how it was hung in my sister’s room. After I confessed that I was a male, I threw away all the women clothing, but I couldn’t throw away that dress. And recently I feel more affection towards that dress because of a hard reason that I can accept.

His Majesty saw that kind of clothes. My face turned red. I hastily closed the closet. I was leaning my red forehead on the closet, and His Majesty asked with surprised voice.

“Isn’t that a wedding dress? And it’s even women’s. Whose is it?”

I couldn’t answer him. I just leaned against the closet tried hard to think of something to say. I hardly found one and quietly said it to him.

“It’s time for you to go to work, Your Majesty.”

I looked at the door, and the shadow of eunuch was walking around the door. I actually meant it half seeing that eunuch. I was wondering if he actually missed his government affair.

“That eunuch looks very worried. I’m pretty sure the officials are waiting. Even if you are the great Emperor, it’s not good to act like this.”

“...Who told you to worry about that?”

I was surprised because of his cold voice. I always nagged about these, but it was his first time getting this mad. I turned pale and looked at him. His cold eyes like when we first met was staring at me.

“You don’t have to impertinently say how to be a great emperor. I was taught about that ever since I was little.”

He fiercely said it and left the room. I saw the eunuch’s feared expression following His Majesty.

I blankly stared at his back. I unconsciously stepped forward to follow him but got surprised and stopped. Then my hands started to shake, and my heart started to throb. Somehow it felt hard for me to stand. I walked to my bed with faltering steps. I couldn’t breathe well because my heart was in shock.

I’m the one who committed the sin. Like His Majesty said, I did impertinent thing, but why do I feel sad... I was the one who avoiding His Majesty. Why do I feel so empty that he left like that... I repeatedly denied, but it seems like my heart trembled just because of his warm finger touched my unorganized hair. I just looked at him because of his strong and haughty appearance. Not only he came into my eyes, but also he came into my heart. I breathe heavily with my trembling lips. I think I’m having a fever. My vision is getting blurry.

Mother... It is your sin. I quietly whispered to myself. Because of your sin, dull-witted with lung disease son was born, and now I became not a man. I became a man who keeps a man in his heart.

Why... why did you make me come here? Why do I have to cover your sin and commit even bigger sin? Why did you not only make me into my sister’s rain and but also make me into his rain? Why did you make me into a rain that might dirty his strong and haughty stand?

I am really the evil spirit from the Flower Fence Palace... I laughed like crazy while I was crying. The evil spirit that will ruin the great emperor... Struggling to embrace the person that I can’t even hold. I am the evil spirit that will dirty him at the end. Can’t even die and just staying here and making him hear bad things... What if I get discovered...? It’s like putting mud on North Empire’s Emperor’s name. And not only that, I became arrogant just because he pitied me and because of curiosity I made him mad.

I grabbed my shivering hands. My heart ached because I felt like the warmth that was on my hand flew away without hesitant. Because my heart ached, it was harder for me to breathe. I started to cough. Because of strong cough, things I ate for breakfast came up. I tried to cover my mouth with my icy cold hand, but the cough didn’t stop. My ears got hot. I think I’m getting a fever... I thought of wanting to die with the fever... even while I was coughing endlessly. It was a bad thought, but I really wished it to be true. After thinking about that, my cough got even worst. I fell down on the floor and started to retch.

“Your Highness!”

Soa panicked seeing me throwing everything up and coughing. She came in to help me. I faintly heard Soa was holding me and screaming for the other servants. The fever suddenly rose, and in my blurry vision, I saw the closet. If the fever goes down, I will burn the dress. After keeping him in my heart, I couldn't throw it away. Even though I did the nuptial by myself, I still wore that pure white dress and bow down to the side where His Majesty was, and we exchanged the nuptial cup. I endlessly sneered at myself, but I couldn't destroy it with my own hands. But I will burn it this time. I can't look at it anymore...

I was thinking that and frowned because of my chest pain. I could even feel the sweat rolling down on my forehead, but the cough didn't stop. There was nothing coming out, and only the cough that will rip out my lungs were distressing me. Soa brought the heated stone to rub my back, but it didn't help. Soon there were some blood showing with my coughs. My clothes and bed sheet got dirtied by my blood.

“..Your Highness....!”

I faintly heard Soa shouting at me, but I couldn't open my eyes properly. I think because of the fever, my mind went in haze. I just let go of my conscious.

Part. 7

He looked at Yeho. Yeho was in pain just to breathe. His feather like hair stuck to his face because of his sweat, and his lips were so chapped that it had some dried blood on it. His effort for trying to feed him well all went to waste in two days. He became a corpse again in those two days. I knew. He was like this because that day I got mad at him. I even saw his pale face because of the cold wind turning blue and kept saying harsh things. And I left him like that. It didn't make me feel any better, so I ditched the government affair and went to the tourney hall with my sword. I destroyed everything I saw. Many body guards were hurt, but that still didn't calm me down. I was even thinking of hunt a deer and rip it into pieces. If Soa didn't report to me that Yeho is not waking up after fainting because of the fever, that poor deer with eyes like him would ended up dead.

After hearing that he was sick, even though the anger was still there I ran to his palace. Realizing how fast I went there made me frustrated. I even grabbed a trustworthy doctor by his neck and brought him to Yeho, but it still didn't feel right. I acted indifferently while the doctor was checking him up. I felt relieved that we don't have to worry about it now, and my anger rose again. The doctor was in fear and even after he left, I coldly stared at Yeho who lost conscious and breathing heavily. I was just staring at him, but I got mad at myself not able to leave him.

He's a man! Just a mere man! A mere man who keeps the white silk dress for one who he loves! I even saved him and now he's thinking of putting a woman by his side!

I leaned on the edge of the tea table. Unconsciously I put more strength to it and using the strength turn the edge into powder and disappeared.

“Your Majesty.”

I heard Soa’s voice, and I told her to come in with annoyed voice. Without a sound, the door opened and without a sound Soa came into the room. She was still a small young girl, but she was smart and skillful, so I put her as a head of this palace’s servants. He looked at Soa cold but angry eyes. Because of that, Soa moved more careful than usual and approached the bed. She was going to feed him the medicine. I got annoyed looking at her putting her small hand under Yeho’s neck to support him to feed him the medicine. I remembered when I first met Yeho, it was her who I called her out. I looked at Soa.

Is it her? She looks at least 15, and Yeho became 18 this year. Even if he is small, he is a man. He probably got interested in this young cute girl. I smirked coldly. But even so, it’s too much to give a silk wedding dress just for a mere servant. He grind his teeth.

While he was thinking that, Soa finished feeding him the medicine and stepped back. He impulsively grabbed Soa’s wrist. Soa looked surprised, but she didn’t make a sound and looked at him. He didn’t like how she was so calm. He looked at her coldly and bleakly said.

“Will you come to my bed?”

Because of what he said suddenly, Soa’s eyes were full of shock. He smirked and grabbed her chin.

“You are very beautiful. Will you?”

Soa politely replied.

“If you think, I’m truly beautiful then I will, Your Majesty.”

“...It sounds like you are telling me I’m not telling you the truth?”

“Your expression is full of anger, so it doesn’t look like it’s because I’m beautiful.”

He let go of her chin and laughed.

“You are very fast. But if I think you are actually beautiful, then you will let me? Hah! Yeho will cry.”

Because of that, Soa’s eyes got bigger and on that spot, she kneel and placed her forehead on the floor.

“Please take back your word. It’s embarrassing to say His Highness is in love with me. I’m just a palace servant. This body is only for Your Majesty. If you say it like that, I just have to let go of my life.”

“Skillful way of talk but Yeho will still cry.”

He cynically said it and pressed down his anger that was about the burst again. Is that right? It’s one sided love? You probably cried looking at that dress by yourself. But somehow Yeho liking her by himself made me even madder.

“Please take back your word, Your Majesty.”

“What do you mean?”

“What you said is not true, so please take back your word. His Highness treats me like I’m his friend. He never showed that kind of feeling to me.”

“I feel bad for the silk dress that’s hanging in the closet.”

He chuckled and said. Soa twitched because of his word.

“Are you talking about the bride’s dress that His Highness has?”

“You know.”

“I dare to say to you, Your Majesty. That dress is not for me.”

“Then whose is it? It’s our tradition that a man keeps his lover’s wedding dress.”

He coldly said it, and Soa bend down her head more.

“I apologize, Your Majesty. But I think you are mistaken something.”

“I’m mistaken something?”

“I’m sorry, Your Majesty.”

Soa said it, and he closed his mouth and frowned.

“.....Tell me.”

His low voice hit Soa’s head. Soa bend down more and told him with her calm voice.

“I know that the small kingdom that His Highness came from doesn’t have that kind of tradition that the husband prepares the wedding dress. And His Highness stayed here only for half a year. He is even not used to North Empire’s daily life. He doesn’t know any of this place tradition.”

He bit his lips and touched his forehead after Soa said that. His ears even blushed, but this time it wasn’t because of the anger. It was because he felt so pathetic. He lost his sense because of the white bride’s dress and forgot where Yeho came from.

“.....I behaved indecently.”

He bite his teeth, and Soa lower her shoulder even more. He felt pathetic and empty and said.

“If he didn’t know that tradition, then why does he have that bride’s dress?”

“It’s His Highness’s”

“.....Yeho’s?”

“He came here wearing that.”

“.....Wearing.....that?”

He just remembered. Yeho came in disguised as Princess Sooyoung. Princess Sooyoung got picked as previous emperor’s concubine. Obviously they gave her the white bride’s dress to wear, and actually Princess Sooyoung had to wear that... He unconsciously chuckled. It had feeling of pathetic and sneering at himself.

“Ahh, I really behaved indecently.”

Soa replied.

“I don’t know what you are saying.”

Because of what she said, he laughed.

“Pretending like you don’t know anything, I don’t have to bring it up again then. You may leave.”

“I’m grateful.”

Soa stood up and took the tray that was next to Yeho. He blankly stared the place and slowly went to the bed. His hand approached at Yeho, and he was breathing better because of the medicine. His skin was little hot and wet. He carefully took off the hair that was stuck on his face because of the sweat and bend down. He lightly kissed Yeho’s pale but smooth forehead.

“I’m... sorry...”

He carefully said a word that he never used before.

“I was wrong...”

He quietly whispered again and sat down on the bed and looked at Yeho. He saw a wet towel, and he awkwardly hold the towel and placed it on Yeho’s forehead carefully. Then Yeho made sound and moved little bit. He calmed his surprised heart.

“...Sister...?”

A weak voice came out through Yeho’s dried and cracked lips. He was surprised and looked at Yeho, but his eyes were still closed.

“Sister...? How about mom...?”

He doesn’t look like he knows where he is. Yeho talked little bit childishly, and he didn’t know what to say to Yeho.

“Did she go out again...?”

He murmured like he resign himself, and grabbed the Emperor’s hand.

“Aho is okay. Don’t make that face, sister... cough.. cough..”

It was adult like, but his way of talking was little childish. At the end of the sentence he coughed. The Emperor panicked and gave him some warm tea that was next to him. Yeho sighed after drinking the tea. After that Yeho moved his head on the Emperor’s lap. Because of Yeho’s sudden action, the Emperor froze. Yeho felt the tension and rubbed his head on his lap.

“Sister...?”

Because of Yeho’s calling, the Emperor hesitantly touched Yeho’s forehead. Yeho relaxed and fell asleep. The Emperor didn’t even realize it himself, but he had a soft smile while looking at Yeho’s pale face.

Part 8

I hold my scream and bit my bottom lip. But I couldn’t help my eyes opening wide.

How is His Majesty in Flower Fence Palace...?! And in my room? And why was I using His Majesty’s lap as a pillow?

I was shocked to see His Majesty was uncomfortably leaning on the wall and sleeping. No way... Yesterday I dreamt about my sister. I didn’t sleep talk to His Majesty... right...?

While I was in confusion, His Majesty woke up.

“Yeho?”

I calmed down after hearing His Majesty’s sleepy voice. My legs were wobbly, but I stood up straight and kneeled down right away.

“I...rudely...”

“Ahh, it’s okay. Stop that.”

When I was about to announce my fault, he blocked my word and waved his hand. He came down from the bed and pulled my arm.

“You just got well. Go back to your bed.”

“Your...”

“I told you its fine. Go lie down.”

I was trying to say more, but His Majesty sternly blocked my word and made me lie down.

“I’ll call for Soa.”

And he left the room. I blankly stared at him leaving the door.

I lay down on the bed and remembered His Majesty getting mad at me and His Majesty now being gentle to me. I feel relieved somehow. He looks fine now. Now I feel like all the tension was getting relieved. I put my hand on my forehead. I covered my eyes and took a deep breath.

“Your Highness, it’s me, Soa.”

It was Soa’s voice. I told her to come in and door opened, and she came in.

“I brought your medicine, Your Highness. You have to drink it before it gets cold. And after that, you need to eat porridge.”

I smiled at her.

“Thanks, Soa.”

She replied by nodding her head. I finished the medicine that Soa gave me and put it down on the tray that Soa was holding. Soa handed that tray to another young maid and got a wet towel and gave it to me. I washed my face and neck, and a porridge came in. The tray was placed on my knee, and Soa gave me a spoon.

“No, it’s okay. I’ll do it.”

I got the spoon from Soa’s hand, and she went to open the window. The sunlight brighten the room.

“It’s bright.”

“It’s because it rained yesterday.”

“...Ah, it rained while I was unconscious?”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

“How about His Majesty?”

I thought His Majesty went to his room to get his breakfast. But what Soa said made me put down the spoon.

“He is with the doctor who took care of you. I think he has some request to do. I heard he was distinguishing what you can eat and what you can’t eat. The doctor was giving him information about what to put in your porridge for lunch and medicine you are going to take.”

I looked at Soa. Soa looked curious because of my stare.

“Your Highness?”

“.....Then...”

I closed my mouth. I felt Soa’s stare, but I just looked at the porridge bowl.

He can’t do that. Even right now there is bad rumors about it. If he skipped his breakfast and not doing well on his government affairs... I touched my forehead because of headache. Soa approached me because of worry, but I sent her away. Soa hesitated, but she quietly left the room. I lifted the tray and put in on a small table next to the bed and came down from the bed. I staggered little bit because of dizziness, but I could stand up straight.

I’m a mere man who has body that can’t be a concubine. Even if it was the real Princess Sooyoung, His Majesty’s affection is too much for a small weak kingdom princess to handle. But His Majesty favors me who is a useless man. Why...? I asked myself and moved. I stand at the window and looked at the sunny sky. It was much

warmer than before it rained, but it was still cool and refresh. The flowers and trees look greener due to the rain and sunlight. The sky was clear blue and beautiful. But nothing came in because I was confused. I leaned against the window putting up my loose hair. I saw His Majesty leaving the palace. He will definitely come back again tonight.

Why does His Majesty care about me...? Calling the royal doctor to here. Does he worry about me getting sick...? Does he pity my sick appearance? Or he got interested in me because I came into the concubine's palace bravely even though I have a body of man? I was relaxed thinking he opened up to me, but I was overestimating myself, and he got angry with me last time. I have no idea up to where I'm allowed and where I'm not...

No, I'm too shameless. I can't even think about that. I'm a small kingdom's distant relative of the royal family, and I'm not a woman. Right now I'm treated as a ghost, but the imperial palace is small. Even though it's big, it is still small. You don't know where and how the rumor is going to get spread. I don't know why His Majesty is protecting me, but strangers will talk.

His Majesty is... not a person that can get involve in those dirty rumor because of me. His is the Emperor of a big country, and he is right for that place. He can't get any flaws in his name. He has to get respected by everyone so that he can get the power for that place. I'm a shower of rain that cannot smear into his name. I the rain that pour at once and disappear when the sun come up.

No... I sneer at myself. Actually I'm afraid. What if I can't turn back because my feeling got so deep. What if I really become his flaw, and how am I going to pay for that sin... I'm grateful that he saved my life. If this continues what if I get greedy. Right now His Majesty take care of me like his friend but just like last time, what if he kicks me out...

“...Sister...”

I unconsciously called her out. I missed her. She is probably living with her lover somewhere in that small kingdom.

“Sister...please...take me.”

I cried covering my face with my hands. It was painful. Strangely painful. I missed how I lived with my sister in that poor crappy house. Tears came down through my hands.

“Yeho?”

I turned my head because of a voice. His Majesty was looking at me with surprised.

“...How...”

Didn't he go back to his room?

I just leaned against the window and looked at His Majesty. A tear drop dripped down on my chin and landed on my palm. I just stood there.

“Why are you standing like that?”

His Majesty frowned and walked to me.

“Why are you crying? Are you still unwell? Why are you standing... Yeho?!”

Before His Majesty could finish he's word, I wobbled because I lost my leg strength. He got surprised and grabbed my arm and wrapped around my waist. I just cried leaning on his arm. I never cried like this except when I was really young. I don't know why these tears were coming out.

“Yeho? What happened? The doctor...”

“...Sister...”

I talked very quietly, and His Majesty stopped and looked at me.

“Yeho?”

“I want to see...”

“....Yeho?”

“I'm grateful that you took care of my pitiful life, but... my... sister...”

I hardly say one word by word. I begged him not knowing His Majesty's face was getting colder.

"I want to go... to my hometown, Your Majesty. I came here preparing to die, but didn't you let me live? So spare me once more. Send me..."

"Do you miss..."

His Majesty's voice was gloomy and aggressive like I never heard it before.

"your sister...?"

I blankly stared at His Majesty's black pearl eyes. His eyes really looked like a marble. Nothing was showing inside. I got a chill looking at those eyes because I felt something bad is going to happen.

"So you want to go back?"

"...Your...Majesty..."

"Did you just say you want to leave this palace and this country?"

I couldn't say any word and just stared at him. He slightly touched my skinny cheek.

"I will plant magnolia tree in this Flower Fence Palace. It will bloom every year. You said magnolia looks like your sister? So I will do that."

"Your Majesty..."

"I can't do anything more than that. Yeho, I don't think you know it well, but I don't have that big heart."

“...Your Majesty...please...”

I hold his sleeve and kneeled down.

“Please... I don’t expect more. I’m okay without anything. Just let me go out.”

He grind his teeth because of what I said. I trembled, but I didn’t let go of him.

“If you are scared because I got angry, I’ll never do it again.”

He grabbed my hand that was holding the sleeve tightly.

“If you miss your sister, I can look everywhere and bring your sister to you. But, you can’t go out. Not even one step out of this Flower Fence Palace. No, not even this room. So don’t do any useless thing anymore. You will get fever again.”

“No...no, Your Majesty... I don’t want that.”

I cried bowing down.

“I don’t like this place. I don't like this palace. I don’t want to stay... by your side.”

He stopped breathing. I closed my eyes shivering my shoulders. You can kill me. I defied your order and rejected you. You can kill me. Just don’t let me stay by your side. This palace is too big and scary for this useless man to handle... And you are too high and precious.

“You...”

His insensible voice dropped on me.

“Sometimes... you push me to my limit. There was no one who could do that. You... have some talent.”

I was trying to beg him again. But his hand tightly grabbed my arm and roughly brought me up.

“...ugh...”

I got dragged like a dry straw dolls, and His Majesty threw me to my bed. His skinny but thick hand approached me and ripped my jeogori.

“Your Majesty!”

I shocked and grabbed the ripped parts. But his hand pulled my hand right away. The bed curtain came down, and my sight got dark because of his shadow. I predicted what he was going to do and got pale.

“Your Majesty!”

“...I, don't want to, talk to, you, right now.”

I looked at him with fear. A big hand grabbed my face. I couldn't see anymore.

Part 9

“...hugh...ugh...”

He stroked his thin and pale but soft line back. Every strand of his hair stuck to his sweaty back. It looked somehow sexy looking at his dark colored hair comparing to his pale white skin. He kissed his spine with his lips, and the wrists that were pressed down shivered. He squeezed the mound where it was receiving him, and he heard a painful moan. Somehow he felt he wanted to be crueller, so he spread his thin thigh widely. His thighs were so thin that it had ill appearance.

“Ugh!”

He was satisfied hearing his sharp scream, but he felt weird. Yes, I was always felt weird with this small pale man. I could've just send him away if he didn't want to be with me. If I didn't want to send him away, I could've just sliced him. It's weird that I'm holding this guy. People who defy the Emperor gets killed right instant. If he didn't like that person, he could just kill that person on the spot. He has that kind of power. Even if that person has strong authority, even if that person is haughty, he didn't care. Even the Empress can't say no to him. He was sure that he could slice that precious woman like a servant. But not with this man. The Emperor never had a person defied him like he did, and he never had a person that he didn't want to kill even though he defied him.

This man never realizes looking at his brown eyes filling up with tears hurt my heart, feeling pity when he faints, looking for his sister makes me mad, and hearing the word 'no' makes me feel like my heart dries away because of the cold wind.

He doesn't know that I smile only when I see his face, I worry about his health so I always take care of his meal, I worry he might cough because he left the window open on windy and rainy days, and I always feel happy thinking of seeing his face.

Because he doesn't realize those, he doesn't know that I feel inconsiderate. Even if I hold him, he doesn't know my heart still aches. And he probably doesn't know that I can't let him go even if he shows painful face because I feel affection towards his thin body.

He held Yeho's body tightly putting his face on his hair. Because of his rough movement, Yeho's moan got louder.

I just blankly stared at the wall lying down. My whole body was sore that I was afraid to move. I felt a sharp pain from the bottom, and my wrists and ankles have bold bruises.

“...Your Highness...”

Soa's voice was wet unlike usual. Soa slowly came to me and tried to lift my blanket that was covering my lower body.

“Don’t touch it.”

I said it sharply but because of my sore throat, it just didn’t sound pleasant. Soa stopped and stepped back.

“Your Highness, your wound...”

“Don’t touch me. Don’t come to me.”

I didn’t even move a single finger and talked to Soa. I just blankly stared at the wall. Soa repeatedly cried, ‘But, but...’ I just thought that’s like her age.

“....Your Highness, please let me see your wound. It will make it worst. If you get the fever again...”

“I’ll just die.”

I indifferently said it.

“Your Highness... If you say that...”

“I...don’t like it...”

I don’t like it, Soa. I don’t like how it became like this. It’s painful and painful. My body hurts, but my heart hurts more than anywhere. Yes, I get it. I get it how His Majesty looked at me. Even though I was a man, I was still a concubine. I don’t know why he held me, but I was still his concubine. I, I just didn’t know that. I get it how he is mad because his interesting toy is trying to leave the palace, but why do I feel so sad. He should’ve killed me, why did he do this...

“Your Highness, His Majesty treasures you. When you went to bed to avoid His Majesty, he always came to see your sleeping face. His Majesty treasures you that much. So, so...”

“Pathetic...”

“Your Highness...”

“I’m not a woman or beautiful. And I’m not even from a famous house. When do you think his affection will last?”

“...Your Highness...”

“Leave it. You may leave...”

“But, Your Highness...”

I closed my eyes and didn’t answer Soa.

Yes, Soa let’s pretend that His Majesty treasures me. I even have him in my heart, so I should be happy. Actually, I am happy. Yes... happy. Even if I’m one of those concubines, even if I’m his toy that he will get sick of it soon, I’m happy that I get to have his embrace. Although it’s little shameful and painful, there’s nothing I can do I’m a man, and I brought a man into my heart.

But, but Soa... I can take what happens to me. I can take the pain but not His Majesty. I can’t stand that I can be his flaw. This already happened, so His Majesty will hold me for a while. This place has many eyes, so the rumor that His Majesty holds man will spread somehow. I’m afraid of that. Yes, it’s funny. I’m still worried about him at this stage...

“...His..Majesty...”

I was in my thoughts, and I heard Soa’s voice. My shoulders and back suddenly froze.

“You may leave.”

“Bu..but...”

“Leave that and leave.”

I closed my eyes tightly hearing His Majesty’s calm but somehow unstable voice. He left not so long ago. He came back already... It’s not even sunset yet... What if someone notices... Mixed feeling of uneasiness and resentment made my chest feel tight.

“Yeho.”

He called me and touched my bare shoulder. I trembled in fear. My body still remembered the pain. But he just slowly stroked my arm and lifted the blanket little bit. And I felt a warm wet towel touching my lower body that I didn’t even think of. I shivered my back because of the sharp pain, and I felt a dull pain in my back.

“Ugh...”

I unconsciously made sound and hunched my shoulder then he lightly kissed my temple.

“It’s okay... little bit..”

“...Stop that... this...”

I was barely able to open my mouth. But his hand was busy cleaning my body and because I couldn’t move due to the pain, I just let him do whatever he wanted to do. He carefully moved his hand and quietly whispered into my ear.

“It’s my first time so bear with me.”

“Stop...this. You...are not supposed to do this, Your Majesty.”

“You nag too much, Yeho.”

And he removed the wet towel. I felt him walking to somewhere. I stood up and turn my body to His Majesty's side. Surprisingly he walked to my closet and took out the white dress.

"Your Majesty!"

I was surprised and moved my body. Then a sharp pain came all the way up to my head.

"Oh no, you can't move."

He hold the dress and came to me. I frowned and looked at the dress that he was carrying.

"Why did you take that out? Leave it. I'm going to throw it away."

"Why are you throwing it away?"

I couldn't say anything. He sighed looking at me and put the dress on my shoulder. I bit my lip feeling the soft silk texture. I felt like crying.

"I heard it's yours."

"I'm going to throw it away."

"I heard you came wearing this and bow down to the side where I went on a patrol. Soa told me."

"I told you. I don't need that anymore."

"No..."

He smiled brightly. I blankly stared at his smile because I've never seen that kind of smile on his face. And I realized. His lips had a big smile, but his eyes lost all the light in him.

"You need it."

I was in shock because of his tainted black pearl eyes. I heard his gentle and sweet but bad feeling voice.

"You'll wear it once more. I'm going to place you as a Madame (Highest among concubines. Ranked after Empress). I already told them about it."

My mind went blank. He softly touched my face with his hand and rubbed his lips on my chin and neck.

"No, it can't be this. I have to tell them to make it again. I'll prepare the highest quality of white silk, satin, and veil and get diamond beads..."

I couldn't breathe.

I'm this nervous hiding like this. Madame? Did he just say Madame? Me a man?

I looked at him in shock, and he smiled gently but somehow it looked insane.

"Did you really think I'll leave you alone like this? Don't even think of leaving this place. This Flower Fence Palace will be left as the place you are staying, but your room will be moved to my room. Few of the previous Emperors did take their Madame to their room. Probably you will be the Madame who stayed in the Emperor's bedroom the longest. Unless either of us die, I won't let you go out."

I blankly stared at his face. He slide the dress that was on my shoulder with his dead smile. I felt a soft silk sliding down my shoulder, but I was still blankly staring at him. His Majesty just kissed my boney shoulder and moved my hair to one side of my shoulder, and he stroked my spine that shows bones.

I am the shower of rain... I can only be the shower of rain... That's what I thought. I came all the way here to prevent from it, but I still became the strong shower of rain that ruins the person that I love. This beautiful and precious person will get dirty by the dirt puddle that caused by the rain.

I closed my eye feeling hopelessness.

Part. 10

I swallowed my moan and grabbed onto the bed sheet. My eyes staring at the ceiling behind his shoulder shook as my body was shaking. His low but heavy breathing and wet skin contacting me felt sad and miserable. I closed my eyes and turn my head and bit my lips. Something warm, wet, and soft touched my neck. I felt sadder feeling that warmth was relieving my heart. I unconsciously moved my waist hearing my name in low voice and heat that was thrusting inside of my body.

“Huk...”

I loosen my body after letting out a small moan. I was still facing the other way and a wet forehead lightly touched on my neck.

“Yeho.”

He called out my name again. Somehow I felt like crying hearing his calling. His big and hot palm grabbed my skinny hand.

“I heard you skipped your dinner.”

He said it while he was touching my hand.

“I ate too much during lunch. So don’t scold anyone.”

I was barely able to reply with my hoarse voice while looking at the blurry silhouette of the moon through the curtain. I remembered he got mad at the chief because I skipped a meal. He laughed because of what I said and stood up. His overly warm body got separated from me, and a cold night air smeared into my body. I shivered because of that and soon a thin blanket got pulled all the way up to my shoulders. And a big hand pat on top of it.

“I know. I heard that too. You finished most of the food. Still you should have taken at least a spoon. You will probably get hungry by now.”

I didn't laugh hearing his teasing sound. I just closed my eyes and shrugged my shoulders. Then he removed his hand on my shoulder and laughed again, but it didn't sound that cheerful. I sighed deeply inside of me and crouched even more. He opened his mouth again.

"Upcoming week will be the start of the sowing season. We do ceremony on that day. You will have to come out with the Empress."

I stoop up because of what he said. The blanket that was covering my body slide down to my waist, but I didn't noticed it.

"Your Majesty, what do you mean...?"

"You are my Madame. Other concubines will come out and celebrate. It doesn't make sense if you don't come out."

"...Is that North Empire's courtesy?"

He smiled showing his shiny white teeth after hearing my question.

"If the courtesy is like that, then our Madame who cares more about courtesy than the courtesy teacher will definitely come out? Yes. And Madame is the highest among the concubines. The Empress stands on my right side and you need to stand on my left side. Other concubines will stand as their rank."

I dropped my head hearing his reply. When I was getting the Madame title 20 days ago, the stares were very sharp. I wonder how uncomfortable I will feel on that day. I wore the fanciest dress that even the Empress couldn't wear and bow down by myself to Heavenly Purified Palace where the Emperor stays and received the title. And I went to Land Embracing Palace where the Empress stays. I went inside the hall and all other concubines were standing in straight line, and I showed my respect to the Empress. My face was covered in layers of veils but thinking somebody will notice that I'm different than other woman, and concubines' beauties like flowers and the Empress more beautiful than a flower sharp stare made me even more timid. Thinking I have to stand in front of their sight during the Sowing Season Ceremony made my heart freeze. And this time I have to wear a traditional dress not a wedding dress. I can't even think of covering my face with veils this time. I sighed deeply thinking all these worries.

"You don't want to go out?"

He asked. I shook my head while facing the ground.

“No.”

“...Tell me if you don’t want to go out.”

“It’s not like that.”

I replied once more and covered my bare skin with the blanket. It was obvious that there will be a bad saying if I don’t go out just because I don’t want to. If I was the evil spirit from the Flower Fence Palace, I wouldn’t care if I go out or not, but now I’m the Madame of the Flower Fence Palace. I wasn’t the princess from the small kingdom who doesn’t know if I was alive or dead. I was the Madame. The Madame that stays deep inside the Heavenly Purified Palace.... That kind of Madame had to be careful every movement I do, and I had to think carefully before I talk. My flaw doesn’t end only with me. It can be his flaw that he forcedly placed me here. So I can’t not go out. There are many other things I have to think while I’m out. I have to call Soa right away tomorrow to make the dress for that kind of ceremony and learn what I have to do not to make any mistake.

I was frowning thinking of all these worries, and he sighed and said.

“If you don’t want to go out, tell me you don’t want to go out.”

I looked at him and looked puzzled.

“I told you it’s not like that. Why are you keep asking?”

I questioned him, and he frowned.

“You don’t look so well.”

“Ah...”

I touched my face.

“Then it’s probably because I have to think what I have to prepare. I have to see what kind of traditional dress I have to wear and learn North Empire’s tradition because I don’t know anything.”

He rested his chin on his hand.

“...Though you still not like it right?”

It made me little annoyed. I told you it’s not like that. He’s keep asking.

“It’s not because I don’t want to go out. Why are you keep asking me that question?”

“I want to hear you say you don’t want it.”

I closed my mouth and opened my eyes widely. Then he had a somehow cold but lonely smile on his face.

“After that incident, I never heard you saying no.”

I knew right away what that incident he was talking about. It was the day I told him I want to leave the palace. The day I told him I want to go to my sister. The day he held me.

I remembered that day and avoided his eyes.

“Do this, do that. I’m the one who always want something from you. You show you don’t want it, but soon you give up and accept it. You don’t even say you don’t want to eat it. I know I order them to give you a big meal. You don’t eat it, but you don’t say you don’t want to eat it. Last time I punished the chief and right after that you ate too much and got sick. You think I didn’t know that? Today is the same. You never show anything, say it’s too much, say no, or say you are sick. Because you don’t tell me, I can’t even show you I know those.”

I just avoided his eyes and quietly listened to him. I saw a blurry silhouette of the moon through the closed curtain. He looked at my face and continued on.

“Do this, do that, don’t like this, like that. Say these. Don’t just say what you have to do. Say something you want to do. Why don’t you see the rain anymore? Why don’t you ask about the magnolia you always asked? Did you even see the magnolia tree in the garden?”

...I couldn’t see it. Soa told me about it though. He moved a big magnolia tree and planted in the garden. She laughed while saying it was so big that the workers had a hard time. But I couldn’t even think of stepping outside. I was too scare that somebody might see me walking to the garden. Same goes when it rains. I was afraid that people might say something about me because Madame opens the window and shows her body unmannerly. I just stayed in this room and occasionally hear stories from outside from Soa. I didn’t have to care anything in the Flower Fence Palace, but this is a different place. There are many eyes like maids, servants, and guards. I knew it very well that I need to be really be careful with eyes like those.

“Yeho.”

He called me. He grabbed my arm probably because he felt distress because I was just staring at the moon. I looked down and quietly whispered.

“It was because it’s too cold for my body during the rain. I couldn’t go see the magnolia tree because of that, Your Majesty. I’m sorry.”

“You still don’t say no.”

He let go of my arm. He stood up and wore the night gown and left the bed. I couldn’t even dare to see his back and just sat still. His cold voice called out the eunuch, and I just fixed the blanket. He announced he will head to the meeting hall after getting helped from eunuch to wear his beautiful attire. Why the meeting hall? I questioned. It will be uncomfortable for him to sleep there because that place is for government affairs. It’s not that late for him to go to the Land Embrace Palace. If he doesn’t like Land Embrace Palace, he could go to other concubine’s palace. I was thinking like this, but I couldn’t bring it out of my mouth. I couldn’t say anything to him while he was heading to the meeting hall.

I sighed quietly. I’m up to here. I lie down and pulled the blanket all the up to my head. I won’t be in his way. I promised myself that I would hide myself in this palace, but still I’m stupid that I can’t get rid of my jealousy. I don’t see the rain and gave up on the magnolia, but I can’t stand him going to other women’s room. I’m barely that.

The reason why I don’t say what’s inside of my mind is because he might leave me.

The reason why I don’t say no is he might get sick of me complaining too much.

The reasons why I'm so sensitive about the courtesy, the reason why I give up so many things and hide myself here is if I do that, no one will be able to kick me out. I can stay with him little bit longer.

Now I can't even say I want to leave. I can't even breathe without him. How can I leave him. I should have left him when I thought I could. This shallow and shallow but suddenly got deeper feeling is stopping me from running away. So every night I cried inside of me. When he goes to sleep, I go to the corner of the bed and cover my face with my hands and hold my cry. I'm crying even now.

Part 11

"You don't look so well, Your Highness."

Soa said it with worry holding the powder. I smiled faintly and replied.

"I couldn't sleep well."

"Is it because of the ceremony?"

"I think so. I worry that people might find out, and I'm worry that I might make mistakes."

To prepare for the ceremony, I saw myself fully dressed in the mirror. Soa carefully asked.

"Isn't it because of His Majesty?"

I awkwardly smiled. I heard after he left to the meeting hall, he never came here and stayed there. I still thought he should have went to the Land Embrace Palace, but it was only in my thought. If he actually went to the Land Embrace Palace or any other palaces, I know I probably can't even sleep at all. I hate myself for that.

"Put some more powder, so they don't know I'm a man."

I changed the subject, and Soa sighed and put some powder on my face. Soon later she stopped, and I looked at her.

“Why? Did something gone wrong?”

“No. It’s ready, Your Highness.”

“Is this enough?”

“Yes. It doesn’t really make a big difference. You have a fair and white skin.”

“It’s because I’m pale. Is this it then?”

“I’ll draw the eye brows and apply some lipstick, Your Highness. If I was good at this, I could’ve applied blush and eye shadow, but I can’t do those because I was not in charge of these, Your Highness.”

“It’s fine. It’s hectic to call another person. Do those and put my hair up. It already gives me a headache thinking I have to put a binyeo. How do women carry around that kind of heavy thing on their head?”

“Because you don’t like it, I prepared a small one. And you don’t even wear a wig. Instead I will put a hairpin with a silk cloth. We purposely made this because other concubines will come out with their fancy wig with hairpins and binyeo, but a Madame can’t do lower than them. It’s for your reputation, so bear with me. It’s not that heavy.”

I looked at the long silk cloth that was attached to the hairpin. I sighed looking at the long light blue silk that was almost dragging to my feet decorated with gold powder, silver powder, and even diamond powder, but it was way better than the weight of a wig and a binyeo weighing my neck.

Soa drew my eye brows with thin charcoal and got a light pink paper and I lightly bite it with my lips, and the color of light pink stained to my lips. And on top of the lips she applied incense oil with a brush, and there was a little bit awkward looking woman in front of the mirror.

She put down the brush and this time she grabbed a hair brush. She started to organize my long hair. Soa lightly applied incense oil to put down some hair around my face. She divided my back hair into two section and

braided them. The top one was made into a high bun, and a bottom one was made into a low bun. She put a big binyeo to stabilize the top bun and put a decoration that comes all the way down to my forehead, and stick some hairpins. The long silk was already annoying me, but sighing was only think I could do.

“Stand up please, Your Highness.”

I stood up, and Soa organized the silk cloth attached to my hair and my clothes carefully. Jade color jeogori and on top of that I had a darker jade color long coat that had wide sleeves. A wide waist band had fancy flower sewed on to it. The dress had a profound water color. To prevent the dress to get puffy, the dress was long behind me.

“Even though you are uncomfortable to walk, you have watch your steps all the time.”

Soa said it while she was neatly organizing the dress that was dragging the floor.

“Does it have to be this long? The wedding dress was more big than long.”

“The wedding dress was made like that to pray for many birth. The Planting Festival that happens during the sowing season dress is dragging to floor to represent plowing the ground.”

I nodded at what Soa was saying, and my shoulders froze when I heard the eunuch calling me to come out. I was keep repeating the order of the ceremony and slowly went out the room.

Part 12

Someone announced that Madame was entering. She never came out after she went inside the Heavenly Purified Palace. All the people the government officials and concubines looked at Madame coming in the ceremonial ground with sharp eyes. But everyone held their breath.

This woman looked very fragile. Her body was covered with layers of light colored clothes, but she looked definitely thin like she'll break soon. Her thin and pale face was clean like a child's skin. No, it was very faint. Her skin couldn't even tell if she put on some powder, her calm eye, and her fresh bloomed flower like lips made her

look like she was an illusion. Some people thought she was flying because the wind was blowing the silk and made it look like a clear wing.

Nobody could breathe well because they thought it will blow her away. Civil and military officials were amazed at this kind of woman existed, and concubines were amazed how Madame who covered her face completely during the nuptial revealed her face.

Right after Madame took her seat, the Empress came in. She was wearing a fancy wig decorated with gold binyeo, and she was wearing gold, red, black, and violet color fancy dress. Those four colors were only allowed for the Empress to use. She stood up other side of Madame, and they showed a big contrast. Fancy and gorgeous Empress was the best, but somehow people couldn't take their eyes off Madame. The Madame was standing quietly with her head bowed she looked very humble than any other people, but she didn't look poor. The other fancily decorated concubines were just biting their lips feeling lower than her.

The Empress sat down, and the Emperor came in. He was wearing a crown and wearing gold, red, black, and violet color clothes. He was holding a scepter decorated with round and hard miqueliana fruit. That represented the seeds of crops.

The Emperor walked slowly to the middle seat, and he looked at Madame first than the Empress. But nobody complained about that rudeness. Not even the Empress.

And the Planting Festival began.

In front of the food for the ceremony, the Emperor read the long prayer and bow to the sky holding the scepter. Both side of him the Empress and the Madame kneeled down and whenever the Emperor bowed, they placed their forehead on the cold ground. When it was their time for libation, the Empress pour the liquor first to the Emperor. The Emperor place that in the East and bow down again. Next the Madame pour the liquor, and the Emperor placed that in the West this time. Right then when he was trying to bow, few drops of water dropped from the sky. Soon few drops became a shower of rain. The rain that comes down during the sowing season considered as a sacred rain. Everybody started to bow down to the sky.

But only the Emperor and the Madame stood still. Madame was just staring at the sky getting wet from the rain, and the Emperor was just looking at that Madame. Madame's clothing was completely wet and with her long and slender arm raised little bit higher she was feeling the rain. That gave impression like she was welcoming the guest. That looked so natural that people thought the Madame brought the rain.

Like that the sowing season ended.

The Emperor dried Yeho's pale wet face by himself.

"Nobody knew it would rain."

His Madame couldn't even talk well because he was shivering so much. He felt pity and sorry.

"Your body is very cold because of the rain. Soa, bring me a warm water and a towel. And bring me some new clothes. Bring some thicker ones."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

Soa disappeared quickly. He started to take off Yeho's wet clothes.

"Lea...leave it... I'll... do it..."

Emperor smiled hearing his shivering voice.

"If you are going to say something about reputation, stop it. You probably can't move a single finger. How are you going to do it?"

Emperor cover both of his cold and thin hands with his right hand. He took Yeho's clothes off with his other hand. While doing that, Soa brought a warm water and a towel. She left those close to the Emperor quickly went out the room. The Emperor smiled looking at Soa and washed Yeho's cold face, neck, and body with a warm wet towel.

"Let me do it. You are not supposed to do this kind of stuff. And aren't you wet as well?"

He was still shivering little bit, but he was able to talk properly now. But the Emperor still didn't listen and continue to wipe his boney spine.

"Stay still. I don't get cold because of my energy I learned during the martial art training. Ah, I told you to stay still. Your skin is like ice. After this, go inside the blanket then Soa will bring a warm clothes. Anyway it's a trouble. It's warm enough to do the sowing season, but you still can't stand this weather. How are you going to spend the winter?"

"...I already spend the winter here, Your Majesty. It was pretty rough, but it wasn't that bad."

“Anyway. If I knew it was going to rain, I wouldn’t put you up there. You get sick if it gets cold. Tsk.”

He put away the towel and pulled the blanket all the way up to Yeho’s shoulder and took out the hair that was stuck to his pale face.

“Anyway it’s good thing that it rained. When it rains during Planting Festival, it means it will have good harvest during the year. The previous Emperor never had this. They had good harvest time to time, but it never rained during the festival.”

He said that and turned his eyes to the window. The rain got much weaker than before. It seems like it will stop soon.

“Everyone is saying this. You brought the rain.”

There was a short time of silence and Yeho turned his head to him after hearing that. Nothing was showing in his quiet eyes.

“People are saying Princess Sooyoung from the small kingdom is the dragon’s fairy.”

“...Dragon’s...fairy...?”

He repeated himself quietly, and the Emperor laughed.

“Ah, you probably don’t know. This is North Empire’s folk tale. I heard kids talking about this on the street. It was probably while I was on the patrol. One of the orbs that dragon has the power of rain. One day the dragon lost that orb. The orb lost its control and turned it into rain drops and fell on the Earth. The dragon felt desperate and turned himself into a human and looked for the orb. The drops that the orb turned into dropped on a tree leaf, an ocean, a river, and another drop dropped on a bird’s feather... Anyway he collected all the drops from all over the world. And he finally found the last drop, but that last drop was the problem. That drop was the teardrop of a woman who couldn’t cry. How can he get the drop from the woman who can’t even cry. The dragon thought about it many times, and he gave all the drops he collected to her. That woman gained the power of the orb, so she was able to control the rain. And she became the dragon’s fairy and sends us the rains.”

The Emperor showed an awkward smile like any other ordinary man.

“It’s boring. I heard it from a boy, and I think he was way better than me. The story was longer and better than this... It seems like I can’t be a story teller.”

“It was fun, Your Majesty.”

Yeho smiled gently, and he added a joke.

“Still it doesn’t make sense me being the dragon’s fairy. I’m not even a woman.”

The Emperor was extremely happy to see Yeho’s laugh in a long time. When he stopped saying no, his smile also disappeared. Whenever he realizes that, he couldn’t stand his heartache. Even with his pain, he still couldn’t let Yeho go. He felt like if he let Yeho go, he would go crazy and ends up cutting Yeho’s neck without even realizing, so he decided to ignore his pain. The Emperor laughed more because he was happy to see Yeho’s faint smile. And he wrapped Yeho’s face and kissed his smiling lips. Yeho accepted his lips, but later he stepped back and separated their lips.

“It’s cold. It’s because you are still wearing that wet clothes. You will get sick. Tell eunuch to bring new clothes.”

The Emperor smile got deeper hearing his nag starting. This kind of part never changes.

“You should help me. It’s not easy to take off wet clothes.”

The Emperor smiled mischievously, and Yeho avoided his eyes.

“I’ll help you when you tell them to bring you a new clothes.”

“What for?”

“Your Majesty.”

Yeho slightly reprimanded him, but the Emperor still had his smile and kiss Yeho’s thin shoulder.

“Just don’t say anything and help me take off my clothes.”

Yeho just gave up and sighed.

Part 13

I slowly stoop up and wore the night gown that was left from Soa. I touched my messy hair that was covering my eyes to the back. I turn my head and saw him sleeping showing his bare chest. I pulled up the blanket that was barely covering his waist all the way up to his chest and came down from the bed. I saw it was raining through the opened window. I frowned looking at the dark sky. He spent his whole day on the bed there will be another bad saying again. They probably can’t say anything in front of him, but they will always talk behind him. I sometimes hear people saying His Majesty made her into Madame so fast, and he can’t get out between her legs. Soa never said anything like this, but she couldn’t block maids from talking outside the window.

I stood in front of the window. I heard the rain drops more clearly. Raining night, it sounded like everything stopped breathing. It looks like all the servants moving around busily all went back to their rooms. I could only hear the rain. It’s been really long time since I put my hand outside the window. The rain drops on my hand felt fresh. I laughed remembering during the Planting Festival. It was my first time getting wet from the rain because I was always in my room looking at the rain. It was icy cold, but I really liked the feeling.

Thinking about the rain made me remember magnolia. Now that I remembered magnolia flower, it made me really want to see the flower. I think there will be no people in the garden because it’s late and it’s raining. It was a sudden urge, and I looked at the bed. He didn’t even move a finger. I was bare feet, so I went to the bed side to wear my silk shoes. I felt desolated the fact that I’m wearing women shoes that my sister even couldn’t wear, but now I got used to it. I quietly walked to the closet to get a long coat to cover my face. I was only wearing a night gown, so I took out a winter long coat and covered my whole face. I quietly opened the door and saw Soa looking at me with surprised eyes. I touched my lips with my finger to give her a signal to be quiet.

“Your Highness.”

She whispered, and I smiled at her.

“I want to see the magnolia flower. I came out secretly. Nobody is here right?”

“Come when it’s bright. I’ll take you there.”

“I don’t want many eyes on me. I’ll be there for a short time so wait here.”

Soa sighed.

“You are probably not used to get there. Can you go there by yourself? I’ll lead you there. But I can’t stay there for a long time, so you have to come back soon as possible.”

Soa was right, so I nod my head. Soa looked around and lead me. I followed her through the dark maze like ally. I turned the corner few times and saw the garden surrounded by corridor.

“Ah...”

I was amazed looking at that big magnolia tree in the garden. Just like Soa said, this magnolia tree was very big. I was thinking it was amazing that they were able to move the tree. The flowers bloom during the beginning of the spring, so lot of the flowers were already fallen, and most of them were new leaves coming out. Still there were some few flowers in the rain shivering. I unconsciously tried to go inside the garden, but Soa ran to me and stopped me.

“You already got wet from the rain today, so don’t go outside.”

“I’ll come back fast just a little bit closer. We have to go back in anyway. There isn’t anyone here so just a little bit. Soa, you stay here.”

“Your Highness.”

“I told you to stay. You have to take care of me when I get sick, so you can’t get wet.”

I said it jokingly, and Soa stood still on that spot with displeased face. I smiled at Soa and went out to the garden. My long coat got immediately wet because of the rain. I took off the long coat that was covering my head and soon I felt cold rain drops on my face. I laughed thinking I can’t even think of doing this during the winter. I was getting the rain with my hand and shook it off and started to walk slowly. I approached to the magnolia tree, and one flower pedal couldn’t stand the rain drops and fell right in front of me. I picked up that thick and soft pedal. I was touching the pedal and looked at the tree again. Rain drops dropping between the leaves and dark sky showing between those leaves somehow looked lonely. I touched the tree branch and turned my body. It’s time for us to go back. We couldn’t stay outside for a long time because it’s Soa’s shift right now, and I will get sick like I joked if I stay like this for too long. And if somebody sees me, I will be in a difficult stand if the rumor spreads how Madame comes out secretly in the rain at night. I saw few magnolia flowers and got a pedal that fell because of the rain, so I’m satisfied.

“Yeho!”

Soa and I got surprised hearing my name shouting. We looked at the bedroom side and heard a mad voice again.

“Where is the Madame? How can you guys not realize that person disappeared?! Where is Soa?!”

“Your Majesty, stay here, we’ll bring His Highness... Your Majesty! You didn’t even wear your shoes, Your Majesty!”

I quickly walked to go outside the garden hearing eunuch’s panicking voice, but he was faster. He entered the garden not even tying the night gown and without shoes.

“Your Majesty...”

I sighed, and he came across the garden. I panicked and screamed.

“Your Majesty, if you come out like that...”

I couldn't finish my words because my mouth got blocked by his embrace. My cheek started to blush feeling his bare chest on my face. I struggled little bit, and his hard arm and shoulder tightened me more. I couldn't move.

"You were out in the garden?"

He whispered to my head, and his voice seemed to shaken maybe because of the rain. I was trying to nod but realize I can't move my body, so I opened my mouth.

"Yes. I came out not so long ago, and I was about to go back inside."

He relaxed his muscle after I said that. I was able to move, so I got my long coat and covered his head.

"You didn't even come out wearing your clothes properly. You will get wet."

"...You came out to get the rain."

He ignored my word, and I looked puzzled.

"Your Majesty?"

"You came out to see the magnolia flower right? Yes? Right, Yeho?"

"Yes."

I answered, and he sighed very loudly.

"You should've waken me up if you wanted to see the flower. You should've wore clothes properly if you were going to get wet. You are barely wearing night gown and a long coat."

“I couldn’t because you were sleeping very deeply. And I was going to go back soon. I wasn’t thinking of getting wet though...”

I dragged my word and looked at the magnolia.

“...Magnolia flower was too beautiful. I couldn’t just stand there. Such a beautiful flower... I should have come to see the flowers before they fell.”

Yes. I should’ve done that, but I was just holding it. If I was too afraid of people’s eyes during the day, I should’ve come out during the night. I was kind of disappointed to see the flowers already falling. One hand approached me and touched my face. I turned my face, and he was looking at me.

“You will get cold. Let’s go inside.”

“Ah, Yes, Your Majesty.”

I turned my body, and he put my coat on top of my head. Because of that, my head got pushed down little bit, and I saw his muddy feet. That scene touched something inside of me. That made me realize I regret acting too impulsively. What was it so urgent to go see the flower when His Majesty was here? And all the eunuch followed him with panic, so they all saw me. I was too sorry because I even made his feet all dirty with mud.

Part 14

I was wrapped with his arm and the coat and came inside the room. I gave my coat to Soa and told her to bring warm water and a towel. And I pulled him to the bed.

“Why did you run in panic? It’s not like I would go out somewhere.”

I got the towel and water from Soa and asked him. Somehow his eyes were empty and looking at me murmuring.

“Not going somewhere?”

He repeated the word, and I questioned.

“You thought I went somewhere?”

“Ah...”

He answered, and I kneeled in front of him with the wet towel and laughed.

“Where would I go? How can I avoid all those guards, servants, and eunuchs’ eyes just to go out of this Heavenly Purified Palace?”

“You...”

I was talking while I was wiping his foot. He opened his mouth.

“...smiled at me. It was your first smile after you came here. I fell asleep looking at that smile, but when I woke up, you weren’t here. My heart dropped. I was thinking you smiled at me like that just to run away from me. That made my mind go blank.”

He was talking vacantly, and I looked at him. He looked at me and continued.

“You were standing like you were going to disappear during the Planting Festival. Like you will melt with the rain. Like you will fly away with the wind. Even right now. It looked like you were going to disappear with the rain underneath the magnolia tree.”

He was looking at me like dreaming, and I erased my smile. He wrapped my face with both of his hands.

“Are you going back like before?”

I closed my mouth. But he didn't seem to mind if I answered or not.

“Are you smiling, looking at the rain, and looking for the magnolia again? Or... are you smiling like that to run away from my hand? I... I don't know, Yeho. I don't like when you don't smile, but I get really nervous when you smile like that.”

He pulled my arm. I was kneeling, but now his face was leaning against my shoulder, and he wrapped around my waist with his arms firmly.

“Your Majesty....”

“Tell me. Tell me that you will stay as my Madame. Tell me you will always stay as my Madame. Tell me you will smile as Madame, look at the rain as Madame, and want to see magnolia flower as Madame. Tell me you will wait for the magnolia flower to bloom every year next to me.”

I couldn't say anything.

What is the use of promising him that I will be with him? I can't do that only with my will. Deep inside me wants to promise that and with that excuse, stay with him until this weak life span ends. But I know I can't do that. There will be a day where I will be the flaw, and I know that for sure that trying to stay inside of his embrace will just lead to a bigger flaw....

I might be a flaw even now. I just thought about it. All these rumors are my fault, so I can't say I'm not the flaw. But the reason why I'm still lowering my body, hiding my face, and being sensitive to the rules are because it is still okay. I'm not dirtying his reputation as the Great Emperor yet... It was my selfishness. Yes, I know. I want to stay long as I can. Just like he said, I want to smile as being his Madame. No, I don't even care about being Madame. I just want to be with him... I don't mind being the evil spirit from the Flower Fence Palace. As long as I don't ruin him, I want to be with him. That's why I hide, don't see the rain, and don't see the magnolia. Just because I only wanted to see him... Even it's a foolish dream, I wanted to dream long as I can.

That made me laugh. I'm like standing on a very thin ice, but what did I do today? Because of the story that he said, made my heart weaker and walked out too carelessly and that caused me to have more flaws in me. The flaw that is not only for me.

I twisted my body. I pushed him away because I was too disgusted at myself that I couldn't stand, and I hated myself too much that I couldn't tolerate myself to be in his embrace.

“Yeho.”

He pulled me again and called me. I turned my head to the side and covered my face with my hand.

“Yeho. Why are you crying? I know even if you cover your face. You are crying. What’s wrong? Huh? You smiled. You were smiling. Don’t cry. Smile. Tell me while you smile. It’s okay to lie. I don’t mind false promise. So tell me that you will stay as my Madame.”

“...Don’t.”

I covered my face and swallowed my crying and whispered.

“Don’t do that. Don’t say promise when you can’t promise. Smiling, looking at the rain, and waiting for magnolia... I can’t promise that. There will be a day like that. I’m a dull and foolish person, so I might forget about my stand and do those. But I can’t promise that it will be like this every day.”

I was holding my cry best as I can but still crying voice came out. I was trying to turn away from him, but his arms were like chain and tightened me.

“I’m insanely mad at you.”

He said it on my neck like growling at me.

“You always reject what I’m trying to give you. You always seemed to do whatever I wanted to do, but you never really gave you to me. I told you to smile. I told you to say no if you don’t want it. You can be spoiled with me. I’m the Emperor. The owner of this world, but Yeho, in front of you, I become really useless. I can’t see you being truly happy whatever I do. That makes me insanely mad.”

He said it like that and pulled my night gown down. Now it got completely dark, so the room was really cold. My shoulder shivered because of the coldness. He grabbed my face to make me look at him. My tears were wetting his hand.

“Why can’t you give me little bit of your feeling?”

His voice was mad but at the same time sad. His whispering voice was very low that it came out from the deep inside of him.

“When are you going to stop being afraid and stop thinking about running away?”

Because I can't trust you... I was thinking while I was looking at his eyes sadly. Because I can't trust myself, because I can't trust this palace, because I can't trust the world. But I couldn't say it out loud. If I say it, he will say to trust it. He will say I don't have to trust the world, I don't have to trust the palace, and I don't even have to trust myself, but he will say to trust him. He will promise me to give everything I want because he is the owner of the world. Then... if that happens, I will really trust him.

What will happen if I trust him like that. Will everything he said come true? Will this Most Highness who can get whatever he wants stay with me forever? No before that will other people leave me alone because I became the Madame only with his affection? What about the Empress? This will hurt her high pride. She looks like she won't accept her pride getting hurt because of someone like me. What if she tries to find my flaw? What if something happens that even he can't control? What do I do when it hurts like I'm going to die but knowing I can't do anything about it?

Now I don't even know what I'm afraid of. Whether I'm worrying about my pain or worrying about him getting hurt.

I closed my eyes. I couldn't do anything. The only thing that seemed like I could do was just be scared and hide.

Then I heard a low laughing voice.

“You are not saying anything again. Yes. Just seal your mouth. Just don't give me anything. I'll just take it away from you.”

Part 15

It was hard to believe that this fragile body was a man. Every day I held him, but because my thirst never went away, it was painful. I felt greedy, but if I do as my greed says, I'm scared that I might break him, and that will make me feel more painful. This damn feeling. He screamed inside of him. He screamed like a common guy on the street. This damn affection.

I treasure him. I treasure him so much that I can't even do anything. The Emperor put his face on Yeho's dark wooden brown hair that was shining due to the clear sky moon. He touched it with his hand. He treasured Yeho's blackish dark wooden brown hair more than anything. The Emperor looked at Yeho's smooth jaw line face. His face was white and faint, but his eyes were clean and beautiful. Like the deer that he caught during the hunting, clean brown eyes with pain. But if he was the deer, I wouldn't get hurt seeing this brown eyes filled with tears. I would be happy to catch the deer and cut his throat.

Will it be not painful if I break his neck like the deer? The Emperor smiled brutality. Although the Emperor doesn't have anything to be afraid, he begged him. He always runs away because he is too afraid. What's the point of sparing his life? He is a mere man. Why is it him among many other women and men? There are men way more beautiful than he is. There are many other younger and more alluring men. Same goes for women. Those many women and men will sit around him and if he gives them a sign, they will crawl and bend down for him. Still why does it have to be this man? It doesn't have to be him, but why?

Still... thinking it again. This damn affection... Wonder if he knows why he named it love. If you love that person because of look, then that love is actually for someone else. If you love that person because of coquetry, then that love is for countless other people.

Behind the madness, the sadness was unbearable. He stepped back covering his face. After the anger went away, the feeling of vanity comes out deep inside of him.

I stepped out of the bed and wore the night gown. I opened the door and saw a maid standing next to the door. She looked surprised and called him. He looked at the maid and closed the door again. If I go out like this, I remembered I don't have any place to go. If I go to the meeting hall, this complicated feeling won't go away. I don't want to go to the Empress's palace, and if I go to the other concubine's palace, it will make me feel worst looking at their face and smelling all those make up. I turned my body and went back to the bed, and he was shivering. In the corner of the bed, he crouched and was crying.

What is this. The pain that was hurting his heart made him touch his chest unconsciously. Why is he crying all alone. Like he was waiting until I leave his side.

He walked to the bed, and his shivering shoulders froze, and his wet face turned around and saw him.

“...Why...”

His hoarse voice was wet. I feel like something hit my head looking at his brown eyes asking why are you here. He was crying like this all this time. In a place I don't see while I don't know. He couldn't even make a sound crying until his breath are out. I only knew how to control him with my greed, but I didn't know he was crying like this. Because I felt desperate, I only took care of my scar not knowing this fragile person is getting hurt. I was angry at this kind of person.

My knees bent by themselves because of shame.

He was born as the emperor and raised as the emperor, but he kneeled down to someone for the first time in his life.

“Your Majesty!”

He looked at Yeho who was calling him and running to him. Yeho couldn't even say anything just shaking his head.

“Don’t... don’t...”

He grabbed his arm and pulled him hard as he can.

“...do this. Don’t do this. You can’t do this.”

His shaking voice felt desperate. The Emperor hardly put his arm up and touched his face.

“Sorry...”

After the time when Yeho got sick, he apologized for the first time.

“Your...”

“I’m sorry.”

Yeho was in shock, and the Emperor smiled at his face. He was kneeling and embracing Yeho holding his neck and opened his mouth.

“Do you know? Still I can’t let you go.”

The moonlight was shining on his sad smile.

It's been a while since I went to the Flower Fence Palace. It's been 12 days after the sowing season's Planting Festival. In the dawn, Soa was leading me the way. Because this palace was too far away from the Heavenly Purified Palace, he said he will send an emperor's carriage, but I declined. I'm not used to riding that because I never rode that, and I didn't want to interact with strangers. The air in the dawn was very fresh. I walked pretty fast, so I was able to get there earlier than I expected. Many beautiful flowers planted in the palace bloomed beautifully. Some of the big flowers already had some dew on their leaves.

"It's been a while. I've never seen flowers bloomed in this palace."

I said it, and Soa turned and smiled.

"Yes, Your Highness. You came here during the fall. It's already been seven months since you came here."

"Really? I was thinking barely that much."

I was touching the flower pedals and murmured to myself. There were many things happened, so I was surprised only that much have past. I came here to die instead of my sister. I didn't even die, and even though I'm a man, I became the highest ranked concubine in the country. What else is funnier than this. Except for a month, I lived in this palace for six month. I was happy to visit here again. After the night when he said he was sorry, but he couldn't let me go, we were little awkward to each other. But suddenly, he told me to visit the Flower Fence Palace. I was kind of confused, but I liked it because I'm used to this place. I was thinking and murmured to myself.

"I wonder what he's thinking."

Soa looked at me confused.

"Pardon?"

"No, His Majesty. I wonder why he told me to come here."

Soa smiled after I said that. I opened my eyes widely seeing her smile.

“There is something going on right? You know it. What’s happening? Why didn’t you tell me?”

I was questioning her without a breath, but Soa just smiled. I got little distracted because of her smile and tried to open my mouth again. But when I heard my name, I stopped breathing.

“Yeho.”

I couldn’t turn my body. I was too scare that I might have heard it wrong.

“Yeho.”

I heard my name again, and I turned my stiff body to see behind me.

I saw my sister smiling standing on the Flower Fence Palace’s flower garden. I unconsciously rubbed my eyes, but she didn’t disappear. She is still small and has a white face. She was standing with tear in her round eyes that made her look neither crying nor smiling.

I was barely able to move my feet. I slowly walked to my sister and stood in front of her. She still didn’t put powder on her white face, but her clothes were beautiful, and she used a simple hairpin to put up her hair to symbolize that she is married.

“It’s my sister.”

I was barely able to say a sentence because I was holding my cry.

“My beautiful sister came.”

My sister ended up pouring her tears.

“Look at this. I’m living a luxurious life that you couldn’t. You didn’t see this kind of *norigae before right?”

I was chatting in my old my bedroom with my sister.

“Yes, that’s true.”

“I’m sorry that I don’t look like a brother. We are like sisters than sister brother.”

“Yes, that’s true.”

“So, how is your lover? No, I should call him brother-in-law now. So, is my brother-in-law doing well?”

She smiled like I’ve never seen before.

“Yes, he is doing well. He is probably nervous standing outside of this imperial palace.”

“Huh? He’s here too? Then he let you in by yourself? That fellow?”

I asked with surprised, and she laughed.

“What do you mean? He will get sad if he hears that. He wanted to come in, but he only allowed me in.”

“Allowed? Who?”

At the same time when I asked, I thought of him. That sudden realization made me go blank, and my sister had little dark face.

“He said, ‘I almost became your husband’ to me. I was confused for a while and realized. We were very rude to him. My husband almost faint and so did I.”

“.....His Majesty did...?”

“Yes. He came to look for us in this city.”

I was surprised hearing what she said.

“You guys were here in this city?”

“Yes. We came to look for you.”

I couldn't think straight because of what she said. Look for me?

“I was worrying all this time about our house after I left. My husband secretly hired a person to investigate, but he told us you and mother disappeared. It was not like you were a criminal, so your face wasn't on the poster on the wall as wanted. I was very confused. I didn't think you sent another person instead of me. I had no idea who went instead of me. So I looked for mother. People said mother was leaving the house like running away, so I followed her trace. It turned out she got remarried, but I didn't see you anywhere. So I was thinking maybe you went to the North Empire. The country actually thought they sent me as Princess Sooyoung, and there was no way they found another person in one day to send to North Empire, so I thought about you. That's why we came to this country. But there was no way to send in a person in the palace. My husband tried to find a connection to the palace, and I think that's why he heard about us. He came to us in person and allowed only me to go in. He told me no one knows who you are, so acting too recklessly will be a trouble. That's why I came in through the back gate at night to come inside this small palace. I don't think I can do anything secretly anymore. I can't stand my heart pounding.”

She was smiling and joked around, and I smiled slightly. This is it. Telling me to have a walk to the Flower Fence Palace was to send me to my sister. While I was thinking this, my sister grabbed my hand.

“After I thought you went to the North Empire, my heart dropped.”

I looked at my sister after she said that. Her eyes were filled with tears again.

“How did you do this kind of thing? Do you know how cold the North Empire is? I wouldn’t say this if you are healthy, and you disguised as a woman! I was sick thinking something might have happened to you. I cried a lot too. Thank God that I didn’t hear any male concubine died when I came to this city. But I worried a lot because I didn’t know how you were doing.”

“What are you worrying for? Why did you come back? The weather is this cold. You can’t handle cold weather too. Same goes for your husband. If he left with you, then you guys should’ve lived well. Why did you guys worry about me? You and your husband are so much alike. You guys are too good people.”

I scolded her, and she looked little angry.

“Don’t say bad things. Who’s going to like it if you get hurt for me? Huh?”

“I didn’t know things would turn out this way. I started without knowing things would get this complicated.”

I smiled, and she sighed.

“It’s all my fault.”

“Don’t say that. If it was you then it will be a big problem. You will cry for your husband and eventually die of sickness.”

“Still I don’t feel good looking at you like this. A normal male enters the palace and Madame? I can’t say a word.”

“Sister.”

“I thought it was thankful that you are alive. Yes, I still am. I’m thankful that he does stuff for you too. He seems like he treasures you a lot. He was really nice and respectful towards a mere merchant wife, and I knew it was all due to you. He said you were having a hard time here, so I should go and make you feel comfortable.”

I couldn’t close my mouth because of what my sister said. He told that much?

She read my face and nodded.

“He told me that. Still I don’t feel good. You are a man too. It’s like you became a concubine of another man. Hearing that you are having a hard time made me feel even worst. Tell me. Is it hard?”

I closed my mouth and turned away. She was looking at me pitifully.

“Tell me. Is it hard? If you want, I was even thinking about leaving this palace with you.”

“Sister!”

I got shocked and shouted at her.

“Are you crazy? Going out with who? Do you want to see your husband getting killed? Don’t you ever say that kind of thing anymore!”

“Yeho.”

“Horrible thing to say! Don’t you ever say that again.”

I said it sternly, and she stopped for a second and opened her mouth again.

“Don’t think about me for now. Think about you.”

“....”

“You want to stay as a woman? Don’t you want to hold woman also?”

My face became all red because of what she said.

“You learned some bad after you got married.”

“I’m really serious, Yeho. Aren't you a man as well?”

I couldn’t say anything, and I looked at my sister’s eyes. They were worrying about me. Worrying about I might be living pitiful life and just sacrificing myself. I calmed myself down. And I slowly opened my mouth.

“Sister. I held him in my heart.”

“...!”

“Don’t you think it’s funny how a man loves another man?”

“Yeho.”

“Actually I’m having a hard time mostly because of that. If I take his side because of my greed... You know how I am right now.”

My self-deprecating smile made my sister change her surprised face to sad face.

“You are worrying about him.”

“I can’t let him have a flaw because of me.”

I said it quietly.

“Deceived the Emperor and became a man’s concubine. He hid that kind of man and embraced him and made him into a Madame. I’m going to become his biggest imperial wrath. I don’t want that.”

“Yeho.”

“You might say that’s not true, but you know that’s not true either. After I held him in my heart, everything became very hard. Not to become his flaw, leaving the palace is the best. Sister, do you know? Actually I don’t want to leave here.”

I hid my teary eyes with my hand.

“I’m scare that if I don’t see him, I won’t be able to breathe. The reason why I try my best to hide myself is not for him. I want to be with him. Little bit longer, I want to be with him. But there is no guarantee that this will last forever.”

“Yeho, I get it. Stop it. It’s my fault. Don’t cry.”

My sister came to me and embraced my head.

“I get it. I get how you feel. Our Aho (Yeho’s childhood name) is crying again. You cried because of your sister, and now you are crying for someone else.”

“You cried because of me. When did I cry because of you?”

I said it little bit jokingly, and she let me go and made a straight face.

“What are you talking about. When did I cry because of you? I smiled because of you. After my mother passed away, I only had you. I only looked at you to live. Who do you think that makes smile even now? It’s all thanks to you. When you pushed me to follow my own desire, I came all the way here pretending that I couldn’t win against you. When did I cry because of you? Don’t say those kinds of stuff.”

“Sister…”

“Don’t you ever say that. I don’t want to hear it at all.”

I smiled with my teary eyes. But suddenly I felt something moving, and I twitched.

“Sister?”

“Ah, oh no. It’s kicking again. I think it’s happy to see you.”

She looked little surprised too, but soon she smiled. I looked at her stomach and got surprised and looked her again.

“...Baby?”

“Did you just noticed? I was wondering when were you going to ask.”

She put her hand on her little big stomach and smiled.

“It just passed six months. It’s now moving sometimes.”

“Oh my. I’m having a niece or a nephew?”

I shouted with excitement, and she nodded with a smile. I smiled brightly.

“I can see your husband flying with excitement. Congratulation.”

“Yes. Thank you.”

“Ahhh, you said it was six month? You have about four months. It’s not good to have a baby in a foreign land? It’s too bad for me, but you and your husband should hurry.”

She had a strange face after I said that. I was puzzled and looked at her.

“Why? What happened?”

“Ah, that. We are not sure whether we should go back or not.”

“Why? Your husband’s merchant is still at his homeland. You can’t leave the merchant for this long right?”

“Yes. That’s true...”

She was little struggling and sighed and looked at me.

“He asked us if we want to send our goods to the imperial palace.”

I couldn’t say a word after she said that.

“...Wha..what are you saying?”

“He asked if we want to become a Royal Provider... He told us to think about cleaning up the merchant in the homeland and move the resident to here.”

*norigae - Korean traditional accessory

I was just sitting down and staring blankly in a dark room. I don't know how much time has passed, but it was already night. It seems like he is coming back after his government affairs because outside was pretty loud. I stared at the door. He came in through the door that the maid opened.

“Yeho?”

He looked at me with surprise.

“You didn't stay in the Flower Fence Palace longer?”

“I send my sister away, Your Majesty.”

“Why? You guys just met.”

He walked to me with curiosity. His clean face with his robe looked beautiful. The young Emperor is beautiful, strong, and precious. I was about to smile looking at his face, but I couldn't.

“Yeho?”

“You told them to become the Royal Provider?”

“...Ah.”

He made a troubled face.

“I told them not to tell you. Your sister must have said it.”

“Yes.”

“It’s not something you should worry about. It’s up to them. I actually think it’s a good idea. I heard there is a big profit being the Royal Provider.”

“Yes. I heard that too. Because it has a big profit, only big merchants become the Royal Provider.”

He sighed hearing my sharp tone.

“I knew you wouldn’t like it. That’s why I told her not to tell you.”

“Your Majesty.”

I couldn’t stand it anymore and stood up.

“My sister’s merchant is not even big among the merchants in the small kingdom where I am from. How can they become the Royal Provider.”

“Why not. It’s just paying them in advance and buy the items. What’s the difference between the small merchant and the big merchants. I saw her husband, and he looked like he is very nice and has some talent.”

“Do you want to make me go out of this palace?”

I finally said it. His shoulders froze.

“...What are you talking about.”

“If a small merchant from the small kingdom becomes the Royal Provider, people will say it’s because of your favoritism. I’m the only concubine from the small kingdom, and aren’t I the concubine with your affection? Do you know it will dirty your reputation if people say they became the Royal Provider thanks to my power?”

“That’s not what you should worry about.”

His stern tone made my shoulders down.

“Don’t do that.”

“...That word again?”

“It’s my sister. Don’t let her get involve in this mess. They are very nice people. They came all the way here because they were worried about me. They didn’t come here for any kind of benefit.”

“I know.”

“You shouldn’t have done that if you knew. Let them live like they never existed. I told her that. Just forget about this kind of brother like I never existed. Live comfortably. She even agreed. Like she was waiting for that. She said yes without any hesitation. Her husband is no different from her too.”

He didn’t say anything. I sighed.

“I know you called my sister because I looked lonely.”

He looked at me.

“You called her because I might get attached to this place and not think of running away if my sister is here, right?”

“...If you knew and you nag me this much?”

He said it like jokingly, and I faintly smiled.

“I can’t even run away, right? Did you see me going out anywhere from this deep inside of the Heavenly Purified Palace? Just leave my sister and her husband be.”

After I said that, he just stared at me and quietly murmur to himself.

“...You don’t say you won’t run away.”

I quietly put my head down after what he said. He sighed and came to me and hold my chin up.

“Okay. I got it. I will do that since you want it.”

And he gently kissed my lips.

Part 19

I was very nervous, and I grabbed my hands firmly. Both Soa and I were in shock that the Land Embracing Palace was calling for me. I was barely able to wear clothes, and Soa did my make up with her trembling hands. I simply put up my hair up and came to this Land Embracing Palace following the person that they sent. Right now I’m sitting down inside the inner palace.

“The Empress is entering.”

I stood up right away hearing an outside maid announcing and soon the door opened. Her hair was gorgeously put up with the gold yongjam (hairpin with the dragon’s head), and she was wearing a light violet colored dress. Her face with red lipstick was intimidating. She walked slowly and sat down and send away all the maids. And she looked at me with her cold eyes and pointed at a seat.

“Sit down.”

“I...I’m grateful, Your Highness.”

I barely replied and sat down slowly. I put my head down nervously thinking if she noticed anything.

“So, is it comfortable in the Heavenly Purified Palace?”

“Yes, it is.”

“That’s good.”

She said it like that and drank a sip of the tea that was already prepared.

“I like cooled down teas, so I always prepare beforehand. Do you enjoy teas?”

Her tone made me look at her unconsciously.

“I don’t enjoy it that much.”

“That’s too bad. I was about to ask you to try this good quality tea that just came in. To give that as a gift to a person who doesn’t enjoy tea is such a trouble.”

Her tone was confusing for me. I didn’t know if she was reproofing or not. But still she was drinking her tea and looked straight forward at me.

“Actually you and I can’t be in a situation where we enjoy our chatting like this. Since you are the Madame who entered the Heavenly Purified Palace, and I am the Empress.”

I was struggling not knowing how to reply to that, but she continued.

“Do you know all the North Empire’s tyrants in the past all had their Madames in the Heavenly Purified Palace?”

I felt all of my blood was drying out after hearing that.

“I...I don’t...”

“It’s the fact. That’s why I was the first person to oppose His Majesty when he announced that he will take you in the Heavenly Purified Palace.”

“I see.”

“Do you know why?”

“I don’t know.”

“It’s because it’s not too much to say that the Emperors who took their Madames in the palace are half insane.”

“Your... Your Highness!”

I shouted with shock, and she smiled. Her smile on her cold face was very cold, but I didn’t feel any hostility.

“This is the fact also. But in the past, those emperors left their madames in there for a very short time. They probably had a headache because those women acted like they were the empress or something. But anyway while they were in the Heavenly Purified Palace, the emperors did whatever they asked. Even the things that would ruin the country. That’s why they are called tyrants.”

“I’m... overwhelmed.”

I said it like that, and she still didn't erase her smile and continued.

"That's why I opposed you. I knew he was obsessed with you than any other emperors in the past. It looked like he won't even notice even he go bankrupted by giving everything to you. That's why I opposed him more. But something was strange."

She stood up and slowly came to me and looked down on me. I was trembling so much and looked at her I was scared that she might find out I'm a male.

"One day passed, and two days passed. I didn't hear anything that something went out of the royal storage. I didn't even hear the governments were being replaced. It was strange. Nothing was like this in the history. If it was His Majesty's other concubines, they would act crazy to chop off my arms and legs. Or trying to grab everything from the royal storage."

Her bitter words made me just blankly stare at her.

"And it was very memorable during the Planting Festival. Dragon's fairy that calls out the rain. Because of your humble acts until now, all the conservative high officials are starting to look at you well."

I didn't know what the Empress was talking about. It started to give me a headache. She noticed my state and smiled her cold smile and went back to her seat.

"So, I'll get to the point since you don't seem to get it."

Because her tone was either disregarding me or just considering me, I had a puzzled look.

"I, the North Empire's Empress Yeonchu Sangah, will borrow the Yeonchu Family's powder and become the small kingdom's princess and this country's Madame's background."

"Pardon?"

I replied like I was whispering. I didn't even think that it was rude to stare at the Empress for so long. The Empress smiled like it was funny.

"Compare to being the dragon's fairy, your face is too dopy."

"Your Highness, what did you mean earlier..."

"There is no meaning. Literally I will be your background, in other word I will be in place of your home country."

"I...I don't get..."

The Empress looked at my confused look and smiled deeply. She held her tea cup and continued.

"I don't like you."

"That's easier for me to understand."

I relaxed that finally there was something I understood. She raised her eye brows and drank one sip of her tea.

"Yes. There is no way for me to like you since you broke my pride into pieces as a woman. But I knew this was an arranged marriage, and I knew His Majesty doesn't look at me more or less than an Empress ever since I got married to him. I have no intention of bullying you just because of that. My pride doesn't allow that."

She said it and took one more sip and continued talking.

"Then the only thing I'm really focusing is one thing. Make my husband into the greatest emperor in the history. That is my reputation, and my family's reputation. And..."

She shook a small bell that was placed next to her. Then a maid carefully came in, and there was a small boy came in along. Unlike any other boys, his face was serious, handsome, and his body was built. Looking at his black eyes like black pearl, I knew this boy was his at once.”

“Unless you give birth to a child and threaten this child’s place, I can ignore that you took away His Majesty as a husband.”

The Empress looked at the boy and smiled gently to him, and the boy smiled along. The Empress moved her focus from me to this child.

“How are you doing today, First Prince?”

The boy replied briskly.

“I feel very good because the weather is really nice, Mother. I’m thinking of riding Wanah around the palace.”

“Oh, really? Then I can’t bother you. I will be waiting for you here and tell me all about it after riding Wanah, First Prince.”

“I will, Mother.”

He replied and was leaving the room and took a glimpse at me and ran outside the room. I looked at the Empress.

“Is that the only thing you worry?”

“Yes. There is nothing else I want from you except for that. If anything, this can be the shield from the other reckless concubines. Since you are obedient, innocent, and even better you don’t have greed and ambition, you are very convenient.”

I paused because the Empress treated a person like a tool. It looks like the only person that she actually has a meaning to is that boy who just went out. I closed my eyes and calmed myself down. I needed some time to organize

all the things that the Empress had said like a hurricane. She was just drinking her tea like she is waiting for me. For a short time of a silence, I opened my eyes and looked at her.

“I don’t have anything I want.”

“I know. I knew it when I saw you during the Planting Festival. I predicted your character looking at your very humble looking dress. I heard a person like that existed, but I never actually met anyone like that. I was surprised.”

Even she said it like that, her face didn’t look any surprised at all. I sighed again.

“There won’t be anything you will worry about.”

Her one eye brow went up, but she didn’t ask further.

“I knew that.”

“Just let me stay in the palace.”

She put down her tea cup. It was first time seeing her eyes that dark.

“... You love His Majesty.”

“What makes you say that?”

“Then do you love somebody else?”

The Empress asked like she was attacking me, and I sighed again.

“Your Highness.”

“See. It is His Majesty.”

She said it cynically and drank her tea. She opened her red lips again.

“His Majesty is a very lucky man.”

I didn’t understand what she said. I had a puzzled look, and her cold face had a smile again.

“What kind of a man has both women who will assist him to become the greatest emperor and who just loves him as who he is at the same time?”

I made a blank face after hearing her.

That moment.

-Bang!

The door made an explosive sound and turned it into pieces. I couldn’t say a word because I was in shock, but the Empress just put down her tea cup and frowned little bit.

He was standing there holding a shining sword.

Part 20

“Did you bring the Madame?”

His voice was very scary, and that made me shiver. Still the Empress was just looking at him.

“Yes. I did, Your Majesty”

“Why.”

“Who knows. Isn’t it right for her to greet the Land Embracing Palace right after she becomes the Madame? She even made me call out myself. I was scolding her a little.”

“Who do you think you are?”

I stood up thinking it was too much for him to say even though he is the Emperor.

“Your Majesty.”

“Madame stay still. Don’t say anything. I’ll ask again, Empress. Who do you think you are making my Madame come and go?”

“Even if it’s the Heavenly Purified Palace, she is still a concubine who has to follow the rules. If I can’t even scold her, will the laws even work?”

He raised his sword at the Empress. I got pale and held his arm.

“Your Majesty!”

“Let go.”

“Your Majesty! Don’t do this. Please don’t do this. Her Highness was...”

As soon as I was about to explain, the Empress cut my word.

“Even if she is the highest concubine, the Empress can’t even hold a stick? You are going too far.”

I didn’t know what she was talking about. My mind went blank. What stick? When did she even punish me?

His face turned pale. His black pearl like eyes blankly stared at me.

“Did Empress punish you?”

“Pardon?”

“I asked you if she punished you.”

“No, it’s not true. Her Highness was...”

“You know her personality better than anyone. Have you seen her making other people in trouble? Therefore don’t believe her.”

“Your Highness, what are you!”

I screamed desperately, and at the same time his eyes were full of murderous look.

“Empress!”

“Your Majesty!”

At the same time she coldly called him.

“This is why place for Madame to stand is disappearing!”

He paused after what she said. She pulled my wrist and made me stand next to her and said.

“I know you treasure her. I know you are willing to do anything. You probably feel desperate because this person doesn’t like anything.”

She continued not giving me a time to get amazed how she was able to read his mind.

“However, why don’t you know those are for you?”

...Still that’s not right. She can’t say that. When I was about to come out to stop her, he moved his sword. I was surprised, and she was a step ahead of me again.

“Why don’t you know that she doesn’t want anything else but you?”

I was shocked and covered my mouth. She didn’t care if I was pale or not she continued talking.

“Don’t act like you only see Madame. Other people have eyes too. Even if you only see Madame, pretend that you don’t see her. You are a smart person. Why don’t you know that? This is why the Madame is not coming out of the Heaven Purified Palace. Because you are acting too sensitive. If she goes out one step, it will be a problem if you get mad. That’s why.”

No, I don’t think that’s right... I was about to confront her, but because of her staring, I got intimidated, so I couldn’t say anything.

“She told me she wants to stay with you. She told me she wants to stay long time without any problems. That why she doesn’t want anything but only look at Your Majesty. So be little cleverer.”

Empress endlessly scolded Emperor and avoided the sword that was pointing at her.

“I’m too scared by the sword. I need take a walk to calm my heart down.”

Even though, she didn't look terrified at all. She just took scared maids and went outside. I was left with that door pieces and him in the empty room. I slightly moved.

"Your Majesty, it's time for your government affair why did you come all the way here? You should go back..."

"Ahh, an excuse that you use a lot. Government Affairs."

His Majesty put his sword back in and looked at me. His deep eyes made me unconsciously avoid his sight.

"Yes. Just like you said you can't run away anywhere, so let's see after the affair."

End of that word, His Majesty walked out of the room. I was even thinking of asking the Empress to hide me.

Part 21

I stood still near the window and stared at the appearing stars. Among the stars there was a glowing moon. I was calming my messy mind then the door quietly opened, and he came in.

"Just like you said, I finished my work."

He slowly walked and stopped in the middle of the room. I quietly sighed.

"It must be tiring. You should go to sleep..."

"I'm not tired. I want to hear something that you've been hiding until now."

"I'm not hiding anything."

"No, you do have it."

He said it firmly and came to me right away and grabbed my arm.

"I didn't want to hear that from anybody else. Especially from Empress. So let's say she never said anything. Tell me."

“...What?”

“I think my Madame knows better.”

I was just staring at the floor with my arm grabbed by him. I slowly opened my mouth.

“Tell what? Tell you that I’m scared that I might get caught that I’m a male? Tell you that I dare to hold you in my heart? Tell you that I’m a mere shower of rain that will definitely dirty your reputation, so I was trying to run away because I couldn’t be greedy, but I ended up staying? Tell you that since I stayed, I became greedy, and so I didn’t even plan to run away and struggle to stay as long as I can? Tell you that I still struggle to get more of the feeling of the person I love, so I couldn’t even show single strand of my feeling, so I was rotting from the inside? What if I love you and love you, I even abandoned my sister?”

“Yeho.”

“How about I dare to made a deal with the Empress? I accepted her term just in case you leave my side. She told me she will become my powerful background. She said if I am the Madame, she would be able to block other concubines. She said I was convenient because I’m not greedy or ambitious. She said she’ll let me stay as long as I don’t block the First Prince’s future. There is no way I can block him. How dare this man! So I told her I won’t. Now you can’t kick me out even if you don’t want me.”

“Who told you I would leave you?!”

He screamed at me.

“Why are you a shower of rain?! Yes, let’s say that you are one. Do you think I would get wet by that mere rain? Just like you said, I am the Highest Man! The owner of this land!”

I closed my eyes hearing his shout. Underneath my closed eyes, the tears were coming out. He embraced me and wiped the tears off with his hand.

“Let’s say that you are the shower of rain. So what? Wasn't that a shower of rain during the Planting Festival? A shower of rain that brings good harvest is still a shower of rain. How can the world grow if there is no rain? If you are not here then....”

He stopped his word and leaned his head on my shoulder and said it like murmuring.

“...I went to the Land Embracing Palace before I came here. To see the Empress. I didn’t know what the Empress was thinking. She basically hand you in my hand, so I decided to thank her. Then suddenly she said something. The world’s luckiest man is the North Empire’s Emperor.”

I remembered what she said. A woman who will assist, and a woman who will just look at him. No actually it’s correct to say a man. She said he is lucky because he got both of them.

“The owner of the world got everything. A wife that fits into his place. She was saying why the heaven send a person that loves him to this heartless man. She pretended that she didn’t see me and said it loudly. Yes, that’s true. She is correct. But not because I am the owner of the world or because I have her. It’s because I have you. Don’t ask

me why. If you know where the love came from, then is that even love? I don't know. It's has to be you. I can do whatever you want. I can do that."

I embraced him putting my arms around his back, and I said it quietly.

"Don't get mad at me for being scared."

"Yes."

"I will continuously get scared and care about how other people think."

"I got it."

"I didn't even think of running away. I thought I was going to die if I couldn't see you. So don't assume I'm thinking of running away."

"Okay."

"And, don't, don't you ever kneel down on me."

I whispered to him with my wet voice, and he embraced me.

"If you don't crouch and cry by yourself like that, I won't."

The End

Translator Note:

(Just like I said before this is the internet version. If you get the book, it's much longer than this. I'm guessing the drama CD and the book is similar? I heard the CD, and there were some small story about the Emperor's son. BTW the Emperor's name is Joo Hee-un. It doesn't say in the internet version, Yeho doesn't even know his name up to here. No one dares to call him by his name because he is the emperor. Later the Empress will tell him.)

My 2 months of work is done! Thank you for reading my deficient Yeho translation! I hope you guys enjoyed it!

P.S. Just for my readers who are crying... After this they live a lovey dovey life~ Yeho gets kidnapped once, but he's fine haha.